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## ABSTRACT

### *'Y slepe, and myn herte wakith': Music and Visual Art in Middle English Dream Visions*

This thesis applies an interarts approach to the Middle English dream visions, Chaucer's *The Book of the Duchess* (BD), *The House of Fame* (HF), *The Parliament of Fowls* (PF), James I of Scotland's *The Kingis Quair* (KQ), and the anonymous *Pearl*. It considers the application and presentation in these poems of ideas relating to hearing and vision, and the arts which engage them, music and figurative art. The first chapter outlines relevant theoretical contexts of speculative and practical music: antique Neoplatonism (via Calcidius, Proclus, and Macrobius), Augustine, twelfth-century liberal arts treatises, and French attitudes toward musical composition, lyric narrative, and the proper expression of emotional truth. The second chapter follows with an analysis of music (including harmony, discord, noise, and *vox*) in BD, with an emphasis on meaningful sound and lyric composition; HF on the symbolism of corporeal speech; PF in relation to harmony, polyphony, and discordant concord; and concluding with the internalisation of harmony and triumph of artistic self-realisation in KQ. The second part of the thesis concerns vision and visual art, with a chapter on natural philosophical, theological, and mystical theories of bodily and mental vision, spiritual illumination, the comparison of nature and art, and the literary techniques of visualisation, *enargeia* and *ekphrasis*. These themes are elucidated with reference to Bernardus Silvestris' *Cosmographia*, Alan of Lille's *De planctu Naturae*, and the *Roman de la rose*. The final main chapter examines creative recollection and the relationship between poetry and visual experience in BD; the instability of perception and visualisation of abstract process of motion and transformation of meaning in HF; and contemplation, symbolism, illumination, and Grosseteste's theory of multiplication of *species* in *Pearl*.

‘Y SLEPE, AND MYN HERT WAKITH’:  
MUSIC AND VISUAL ART IN MIDDLE ENGLISH DREAM  
VISIONS

*(one volume)*

Koren Kuntz

*Thesis submitted for the qualification of Ph.D.*

Department of English Studies

University of Durham

2019

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\*Title quotation from *The Wycliffite Bible*, ed. Forshall and Madden (Oxford: OUP, 1850), Song of Songs 5:2.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

*BD* – Chaucer, *The Book of the Duchess*

*Bo.* – Chaucer, *Boece*

*Cal.* – Calcidius, *Commentary on the Timaeus*

*DPN* – Alan of Lille, *De planctu Naturae*

*HF* – Chaucer, *The House of Fame*

*Horgan* – *The Romance of the rose*, trans. Frances Horgan

*KQ* – James I of Scotland, *The Kingis Quair*

*LGW(P)* – Chaucer, *The Legend of Good Women (Prologue)*

*LLT* – Brepols' Online *Library of Latin Texts*

*Met.* – Ovid, *Metamorphoses*

*PF* – Chaucer, *The Parliament of Fowls*

*PL* – *Patrologia Latina*

*Pl.* – Plato, *Timaeus*

*Pr.* – Proclus, *Commentary on the Timaeus*

*Rom.* – Chaucer, *Romaunt of the Rose*

*RR* – Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Roman de la rose*

*Riverside* – *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn

*SEP* – *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Online*

*Sheridan* – Sheridan's edition of Alan of Lille's *De planctu Naturae* or the *Anticlaudianus*

*Stahl* – *Macrobius, Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. Stahl

*Tr.* – Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*

*For Dad, forever in my dreams.*

## INTRODUCTION: DREAMS AND TRUTH

The experience of dreaming transcends historical time and cultures. It has inspired a range of passionate responses, from fascination, wonder, and exaltation, to skepticism and distrust. As Hobson writes,

Dreaming has fascinated humankind since the dawn of recorded history [and] has inspired religious movements, artistic representations, and introspective scientific theories. All of these pre-modern expressions have been based on the idea that dreams contain messages that cannot be delivered in any other way.<sup>1</sup>

Attitudes toward dreaming in the medieval Latin west were influenced by pagan and Christian philosophical, theological, and literary discourse, extending back to antiquity. With the exception of Aristotle, who viewed dreams as solely a product of the dreamer's imagination and physiology,<sup>2</sup> both traditions valued certain dreams for their potential to bring the dreamer closer to God, but dismissed others as merely physiological, such as nightmares, or at worst, apparitions caused by evil spirits.<sup>3</sup> Fascination with the liminality of the dream experience—which is midway between soul and body, imagination and reality, thought and sensory perception, mortal and divine, or personal and universal—is one reason for their enduring popularity throughout the classical and medieval periods, and remains so to this day. In antiquity and the Middle Ages, the notion that visionary experience (that is, through divine epiphany as well as dreams) can occur corporeally or incorporeally, as theorised by Augustine and Aquinas,<sup>4</sup> relied on the idea of “vision” as beyond *visibilia*, or that which can be seen

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<sup>1</sup> J. Allan Hobson, ‘Introduction’ to *Dreaming: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), p. [1].

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *On Dreams*, trans. J. I. Beare, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), I, 729-735, 460b28-461a6. (This edition is abbreviated hereafter as *Works*)

<sup>3</sup> See Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, I.3.3-6 (discussed below). Macrobius Ambrosius Theodosius, *Commentarii in somnium Scipionis* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), in Brepols’ *Library of Latin Texts, Series A* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005-) < <http://www.brepols.net.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/> > (This database is hereafter abbreviated to *LLT-A* or *LLT-B* for Series B); Macrobius, *Macrobius’ Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, ed. and trans. William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952). Passages are cited by book, chapter, and section.

<sup>4</sup> Kathryn L. Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision: Poetry, Philosophy, and Literary Form* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), p. 50. See Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim*, in *LLT-A* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 27 (I), xii, pp. 379-435; Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. John Hammond Taylor, 2 vols (New York: Newman, 1982); Aquinas, *Summa theologiae: A Concise Translation*, trans. Timothy McDermott (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press), Q.12. Art.13, p. 29.



with the eye. Vision, in this sense, includes bodily, mental, and spiritual experience, and visions, both pagan and Christian, communicate primarily to what were considered the two “teachable” senses: the ear and the eye. This is expressed by Plato in the *Timaeus* (31b-32b) and echoed by Macrobius in the late-fourth- to early-fifth-century *Commentarii in somnium Scipionis* (*Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*) (I.6.29), both of which were immensely influential for medieval attitudes towards dreams and dream poetry. As Macrobius explains, God, the ultimate craftsman, used the elements to make the universe “perceptible to sight and touch” [“visum pateretur et tactum”] (I.6.29). Sense perception was thus intended to serve an ultimately spiritual purpose.

The idea that dreams can convey divine wisdom and messages to mortals can be traced in the Western world back to antiquity and is evident in various extant *oneirocritica*, or dream interpretation guides.<sup>5</sup> Judaeo-Christian scripture was the most significant vehicle for the importance of visionary dreams in the Middle Ages. Tallies comprise between thirty-five and forty-five in the Old Testament, and nine (including apparitions and visions) in the New Testament.<sup>6</sup> Paul’s statement in I Corinthians 13:12, comparing the limited perception and understanding of living mortals to the enlightenment and proximity to God that comes after death, to “seeing through a glass darkly”, and then “face to face”, highlights the importance of dreaming, as potentially offering the soul a glimpse of transcendental truth, even as it is bound to a living body.

There were a few different classification systems of dreams available in the medieval period, though the five-fold taxonomy in Macrobius’ *Commentary* was the most well-known, and for the purposes of this thesis, is the one most commonly cited in medieval dream poetry.<sup>7</sup> His dream typology was repeated in the widely read treatise, *De spiritu et anima*, now attributed to Alcher de Clairvaux (fl.

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<sup>5</sup> See *Dreambooks in Byzantium: Six Oneirocritica in Translation, with Commentary and Introduction*, ed. Steven M. Oberhelman (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Jacques LeGoff, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 193-4. He discusses the differences between Biblical and pagan dream taxonomies in depth.

<sup>7</sup> Other classification schemes, such as those in medical treatises, are mentioned in Douglas Gray, ‘dreams’, in *The Oxford Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Douglas Gray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 147-50 (p. 47).

12<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>8</sup> The *Commentary* was also the primary means by which Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, or *Dream of Scipio*, originally the sixth and concluding book of Cicero's *De re publica*, became available in the Middle Ages.<sup>9</sup> (The Ciceronian fragment was only known as an appendage to the Macrobian *Commentary* throughout most of the Middle Ages and until the nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup>) Cicero's entire text was modelled after Plato's *Republic*, and likewise deals with the topic of the ideal commonwealth, albeit from his own perspective, and the dream is, as Stahl argues, "an obvious imitation" of the earlier text's closing episode, the Vision of Er (*Republic* X, 615b-621d).<sup>11</sup> The *Somnium* relates the Roman general and king Scipio Aemilianus' (Scipio the Younger)'s account of his late grandfather, Scipio Africanus, while on a visit to Masinissa, a Roman ally during the Second Punic War,<sup>12</sup> and the ensuing dream in which he is visited by his grandfather, who shows him the earth from the heavens and instructs him in living virtuously so his soul may be rewarded. Scipio the Younger learns of the grand harmony of the universe, viewing the planetary spheres in motion and, significantly, hearing the music produced by their revolutions, which, as Africanus explains, cannot normally be heard by mortals (*Somnium* V.3).<sup>13</sup> While Cicero's dream embraced Platonism, Macrobius' translation and commentary reflect Neoplatonist views. Regarding the philosophical and temporal disparities between Platonism and Neoplatonism, Stahl argues that Macrobius merely views Cicero as a Neoplatonist and presents him as such.<sup>14</sup> It was this brand of Neoplatonism that would become central to medieval science and scholasticism, with Macrobius frequently cited as an authority.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Alcherus Claraevallensis, *De spiritu et anima*, in *LLT-A* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), cap. 25, col. 798 [accessed 27 February 2019]; see Steven F. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 63. Here, Kruger details the extensive influence of Macrobian dream theory throughout the Middle Ages.

<sup>9</sup> William Harris Stahl, 'Introduction', in *Macrobius' Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. and ed. William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 3-65 (p. 10).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Stahl, 'Introduction', p. 11; Plato, *Republic*, trans. G. M. A. Grube, C. D. C. Reeve, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1997), 971-1223.

<sup>12</sup> Douglas Gray, 'Dream of Scipioun', in *Oxford Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Gray, p. 150.

<sup>13</sup> The *Somnium Scipionis* is cited as it appears in the above editions of Macrobius' *Commentary*.

<sup>14</sup> Stahl, 'Introduction', p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> Stahl, 'Introduction', p. 10. For a truer representation of Neoplatonist theory, Stahl writes that one "would of course do well to ignore Macrobius and go directly to the masters [...] Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Proclus." (*Ibid.*)

Macrobius' *Commentary* expands upon the dream and contextualises it in relation to fundamental Neoplatonic beliefs. It was among the most significant sources of Platonism in the medieval Latin west, along with Calcidius' *Commentary on the Timaeus* (written after c. 325 CE).<sup>16</sup> Macrobius' text survives in at least thirty-eight German manuscripts, twenty-eight French, eleven British, twelve Italian, and four Spanish.<sup>17</sup> Although it was best known in the Middle Ages as a guide to dream interpretation, the subject of dreams occupies a relatively small portion of the text (I.3), the rest of which is an elaborate Neoplatonic cosmology. The first book provides a hierarchical taxonomy of dreams based upon their ability to yield transcendental truth, giving Greek and Latin names for each type: enigmatic (Gk. *oneiros*, Lat. *somnium*), prophetic (*horama; visio*), oracular (*chrematismos; oraculum*), nightmare (*enypnion; insomnium*), and apparition (*phantasma; visum*) (I.3.2). Two of the five types are potential sources for wisdom: "somnia", which function symbolically and thus require interpretation (I.3.10), and "visiones", in which a human or divine individual foretells the future, which are oracular until they come true, in which case they become prophetic (I.3.8-9). Macrobius aligns himself with earlier philosophers by invoking the Neoplatonist Porphyry's comments on a passage from Homer (*Odyssey* 29.562-7) in relation to the soul's apprehension of truth in dreams:<sup>18</sup>

latet, inquit, omne verum. hoc tamen anima cum ab officiis corporis somno eius paululum libera est interdum aspicit, non numquam tendit aciem nec tamen pervenit, et cum aspicit tamen non libero et directo lumine videt sed interiecto velamine, quod nexus naturae caligantis obducit.

All truth is concealed. Nevertheless, the soul, when it is partially disengaged from bodily functions during sleep, at times gazes and at times peers intently at the truth, but does not apprehend it; and when it gazes it does not see with clear and direct vision, but rather with a dark obstructing veil interposed. (I.3.17-18)

Theorists debated the extent to which the soul could be "disengaged" from the body in sleep, which would surely entail the death of the body: in the *Roman de la rose* (RR), Jean de Meun's Nature considers

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Stahl, 'Introduction', p. 60 takes these statistics from Max Manitius, *Handschriften antiker Autoren in mittelalterlichen Bibliothekskatalogen* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1935), pp. 227-32.

<sup>18</sup> Macrobius refers to Porphyry's *Commentaries*. Cited in Stahl's note, p. 92. Also see Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: The Softback Preview, in association with The Penguin Group, 1997).

it “foolish” [“folies”] (18441-6; Horgan 284).<sup>19</sup> More importantly, however, the relationship between corporeal and incorporeal sensation—the former necessary for human thought but more removed from the abstract quality of divine truth—expresses a fundamental convergence between theological and philosophical attitudes to knowledge and perception. Although Macrobius was a pagan, his Neoplatonism was integrated into Christian thought. As LeGoff notes, “Macrobius was a member of a small but important group of writers and encyclopedists who began as pagans but died Christians and who attempted to condense and popularize the classical liberal arts and the philosophy and science of antiquity,” the last of these being Isidore of Seville.<sup>20</sup> Macrobius’ thought influenced medieval theology and scholasticism, particularly during a revived intellectual interest in dreams in the twelfth century, exemplified by the *De spiritu et anima* and John of Salisbury’s *Policraticus*.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> All references to the original text of RR are from Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la rose*, ed. Armand Strubel (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1992). Translations are from Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. Frances Horgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). Lines in the French text are followed by Horgan’s pagination, since the lines in each edition differ.

<sup>20</sup> LeGoff, *Medieval Imagination*, p. 201.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

*Literary Dreams: Allegory and Dream Poetry*

The generic designation “dream vision” is a critical term that originated in 1906 amid arguments regarding the genre’s true coherence, identifying narrative structure as the only common vein between tales containing otherwise diverse subject matter.<sup>22</sup> Some, such as *Pearl*, are explicitly religious in subject matter; others, including *Piers Plowman* and *Winner and Wastour*, are more socio-political; there are also more secular and comic works, like *The Owl and the Nightingale*, and Chaucer’s *House of Fame* (HF) and *Parliament of Fowls* (PF), and courtly love visions following RR, such as *The Kingis Quair* (KQ). Many, including the aforementioned Chaucerian works, belong to multiple categories: Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* (CA) is a prime example of the dream vision encompassing many topics and generic modes. Additionally, philosophical allegories are not always presented as dreams, though they overlap formally and thematically with the vernacular medieval dream vision. Although works of the latter type tend to focus on explicitly human concerns—including courtly love dream visions modelled after the *Roman de la rose* (the first four thousand lines of which were written by Guillaume de Lorris between 1225 and 1230 and completed by Jean de Meun between 1269 and 1278), and spiritual and philosophical flights, as Dante’s *Divina Commedia* (begun c. 1307) and Boethius’ *Consolation*—all are in one form or another didactic. In the final line of *De planctu Naturae* (DPN), the narrator describes the moment of awakening:

Huius imaginariae visionis subtracto speculo, me ab exstasis excitatum insomnio prior mysticae apparitionis dereilquid aspetus. (18.20)

When the mirror of this imaginary vision was withdrawn, the sight of the previous mystical apparition left me awakened from my strange ecstatic dream.<sup>23</sup>

Some texts containing the common conceits associated with the dream vision describe the vision as experienced by the narrator while awake. Dante’s *Commedia* and Gower’s *CA* are often considered

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<sup>22</sup> William A. Quinn, ‘Medieval Dream Visions: Chaucer’s *Book of the Duchess*’, in *Readings in Medieval Texts: Interpreting Old and Middle English Literature*, ed. David Johnson and Elaine Treharne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 322.

<sup>23</sup> All references to the works of Alan of Lille are from Alan of Lille, *Literary Works of Alan of Lille*, ed. with facing page translation by Winthrop Wetherbee (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013) unless otherwise noted.

dream visions, though neither portray their narrators as falling asleep before the vision begins. Sometimes an awakened narrator hints at parody, as in *The Owl and the Nightingale*, in which the narrator witnesses a raucous, bawdy debate between the birds, in contrast to the conventional courtly dream vision. There are also dream visions that are described as “Chaucerian”, a term which, as the section on *KQ* argues, has a variety of implications. *KQ* may be considered a Chaucerian dream vision in its explicit emulation of Chaucer’s style, form, and approach to love and fortune in terms of consonance and dissonance.

When defining dream poetry, it is perhaps best to look to Spearing, whose criticism of this type of literature has been foundational to virtually all later criticism on the topic. He outlines the now standard definition of the dream vision in late-medieval vernacular literature:

[E]ssentially a dream-poem, from the fourteenth century on, is a poem which has more fully realized its own existence as a poem. Compared with other poems, it makes us more conscious that it has a beginning and an end (marked by the falling asleep and awakening of the narrator); that it has a narrator, whose experience constitutes the subject-matter of the poem; that its status is that of an imaginative fiction (whether this is conceived as a matter of inspiration, or of mere fantasy, or somewhere between the two); in short that it is not a work of nature but a work of art.<sup>24</sup>

The literary form which used the dream as a narrative conceit originated much earlier than the high medieval period, and is conservatively estimated to have been used over 225 times from the sixth to fifteenth centuries. The genre reached its pinnacle after 1100 when, according to Lynch’s estimation, about seventy percent of all visions and ninety of the fictional type were most likely to have been composed.<sup>25</sup> The popularity of Neoplatonist treatises such as Macrobius’ *Commentary*, Latin commentaries on the *Timaeus*, and Neoplatonist allegorical and theoretical texts on the liberal arts by Martianus Capella and Boethius (in the fifth and early sixth centuries, respectively) among twelfth-century medieval scholastics gave rise to a body of literature known as philosophical allegory, which was a major influence on the development of the vernacular dream vision tradition, which emerged

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<sup>24</sup> A. C. Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 4-5.

<sup>25</sup> Lynch, *High Medieval Dream Vision*, p. 1. Computed by Lynch from charts in Peter Dinzelbacher, *Vision und Visionsliteratur im Mittelalter, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters* 23 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1981).

after 1180. The genre flourished particularly in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and in France is connected with musical composition, most popularly by Guillaume de Machaut.

As Lynch argues, the literary vision was the perfect medium for exploring philosophical and spiritual issues.<sup>26</sup> Martianus' allegory of the integrity and harmonisation of the liberal arts, *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* (*Marriage of Philology and Mercury*) (c. 400), was an important exemplar for the philosophical allegories of Bernardus Silvestris (c. 1300) and Alan of Lille (c. 1128-c. 1202), which dramatised Neoplatonist cosmology. Like the *Timaeus*, Bernardus' *Cosmographia* portrays the creation of the universe and mankind. In addition to dramatising moments of divine generation and reconciliation, some allegories relate encounters between mortal and divine beings: Alan's *De planctu Naturae* (*The Complaint of Nature*) depicts the reconciliation of fallen mankind with Nature, and his *Anticlaudianus*, virtually a sequel to *DPN*, includes a *Cosmographia*-esque journey of divine beings through the farthest reaches of the universe to create the "novus homo", or "new man". Although these texts are distinct in many ways, they share with the treatises upon which they are modelled an allegorical and symbolic mode of discourse intended to communicate transcendental truths. They present the reader with abstract ideas expressed in the familiar terms of characters and narrative. Allegory thus functions like the veil described by Macrobius, which clothes that which is unknowable, ineffable, and inconceivable to humans in sensible terms.

By the twelfth century, the medieval university institutionalised the pursuit of truth, the *quadrivium* systematically supporting the study of abstracts through arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy with the purpose of "liberating the eye of the soul [...] from corporeality".<sup>27</sup> Philosophical allegories, some of which belong the genre known as *Hexameron* literature (alluding to the six days of Creation), present the macrocosmos and microcosmos in sensible terms. In this way, writers build

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<sup>26</sup> Lynch, *High Medieval Dream Vision*, p. 49.

<sup>27</sup> Henry Chadwick, *Boethius: The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology and Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), p. 73.

upon the philosophical (and, as discussed in relation to mysticism, theological) belief that higher understanding can be gained through the *visibilia* of nature. Mankind, as a union of the corporeal body and incorporeal soul, relies upon sensory experience. Bernardus Silvestris articulates this view in the *Cosmographia*, when Noys describes the creation of man as a “sacred union” [“sacra conplacitum”] between heavenly understanding and the elemental body, making man both divine and earthly (*Microcosmus* 10.15-19):

Naturis poterit sic respondere duabus,  
et sic principiis congruous esse suis. (20-21)  
[...]  
Cum superis commune bonum rationis habebit:  
distrahet a superis linea parva Hominem. (25-26)

Thus can he conform to his dual nature and remain in harmony with his two defining principles [...] he will possess the gift of reason in common with higher powers; only a thin line will separate Man from the gods.<sup>28</sup>

The popularity of dream narratives attests to the scholastic mindset contained in Bernardus’ widely quoted dictum, “to know more is to approach God”.<sup>29</sup> Many dream visions harmonise natural philosophy and theology, reflecting “the age’s ideal”, as Lynch indicates.<sup>30</sup> The combination of science and religion can be traced as far back as Nicomachus (c. 60-c. 120 CE), who held that the mathematics of cosmological harmony are aligned with the harmony that binds the soul and body.<sup>31</sup> The theme of divine wisdom, communicated through symbols seen while conscious or unconscious, presented in early Neoplatonic works, was thus disseminated through the twelfth-century philosophical allegories, and eventually into different treatments of truth in the vernacular medieval dream vision tradition, from true love (divine and erotic), to true knowledge, artistic truth, spiritual truth, and sociopolitical truth. Often, however, true wisdom, perfect harmony, and illumination are highlighted in these texts

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<sup>28</sup> All quotations of the works of Bernardus Silvestris are from the parallel text edition, Bernardus Silvestris, *Poetic Works*, trans. Winthrop Wetherbee (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015) unless otherwise noted.

<sup>29</sup> Bernardus Silvestris, *The Commentary on the First Six Books of the Aeneid of Vergil Commonly Attributed to Bernardus Silvestris*, ed. Julian Ward Jones and Elizabeth Frances Jones (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1977), p. 44 (Cited by Lynch, p. 21).

<sup>30</sup> Lynch, *High Medieval Dream Vision*, p. 27.

<sup>31</sup> Chadwick, *Boethius*, p. 72.



as only partially achievable by mortals. In striving for transcendent truth, the limits of human comprehension and expression become apparent. The vernacular dream visions reveal glimpses of the divine, albeit always mediated through human modes of comprehension and representation. Knowledge is gained through the senses. Dream poetry thus communicates to the eye and the ear, aiding the imagination in contemplating things beyond the realm of ordinary experience. The resulting truth, however, is not unmediated spiritual illumination, for mortal sight is through a glass, darkly. Instead, the transformation of perception and meaning allows dreamers to reflect upon the disorder and dissonance that accompany the eternal order of the mortal sphere.

## *Approach*

This thesis addresses the pursuit of truth in relation to art and love in selected Middle English dream poetry, in relation to hearing and vision. In philosophical allegory and dream visions, the arts engage both the body and spirit. While Plato's rejection of poetry and the other arts as untruthful "imitation" (*Republic* X, 597-608) is now common knowledge, the *Republic* was virtually unknown in the medieval Latin west, and only indirectly. Aristotelian-influenced scholasticism flourished from the thirteenth to mid-fourteenth centuries.<sup>32</sup> The *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics* were relatively unknown (apart from Hermann the German's Latin translation of the latter from Avicenna's Arabic commentary (c. 1256)),<sup>33</sup> however, much of the Aristotelian corpus was accessible in Latin via the translations of Aquinas (1255-74) and William of Moerbeke (c. 1220-86), in addition to numerous commentaries.<sup>34</sup> By the early thirteenth century, the three treatises of Aristotle's *Parva naturalia* (*Short Treatises on Nature*) that focus on sleep and dreams—*De somno et vigilia* (*On Sleep and Waking*), *De insomniis* (*On Dreams*), and *De divination per somnum* (*On Divination through Sleep*)—had been translated into Latin, along with Arabic commentaries on them.<sup>35</sup> The full corpus was later "rediscovered" in the sixteenth century.<sup>36</sup> Allen highlights the significance of the Aristotelian view of art as ethical in medieval thought: "[t]o define ethics in medieval terms is to define poetry, and to define poetry is to define ethics, because medieval ethics was so much under the influence of the literary *paideia* as to be enacted poetry."<sup>37</sup>

The dream vision is an essentially didactic form, although allegory and symbolism can make interpretation of its ethical significance challenging. The effectiveness of dream visions as a vehicle

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<sup>32</sup> J. D. North, 'science', in *Oxford Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Gray, 428-30 (p. 429).

<sup>33</sup> J. A. Burrow, *Medieval Writers and their Work* (Oxford: OUP, 1982), p. 14.

<sup>34</sup> J. D. North, 'Aristotle', in *Oxford Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Gray, 28-29.

<sup>35</sup> Michael Raby, 'Sleep and the Transformation of Sense in Late Medieval Literature', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 39 (2017), 191-224 (p. 199).

<sup>36</sup> Burrow, p. 14.

<sup>37</sup> Judson Boyce Allen, *The Ethical Poetic of the Later Middle Ages: A Decorum of Convenient Distinction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p. 12.

for self-discovery and divine contemplation is enhanced by the use of poetry to appeal to the inner eye and ear, adapting techniques and ideas from the musical and pictorial arts into a textual form. By evoking and simulating sensible phenomena, dream visions become vivid in the imagination of the audience and invite them along on the dreamer's journey. It is through the divine gifts of sense perception and reason that humans, as inhabitants of the mortal sphere, can apprehend the eternal truths underlying the sensible veil of the created world.

Poetry, as Wetherbee explains, has the "capacity to reveal complex and ambiguous experience."<sup>38</sup> While the writers of philosophical allegories and dream visions often lament the difficulty of describing divine or otherwise extraordinary experience, they rely on alternatives to reason. Writing dreams, like dreaming itself, is a transformative journey that pushes the limits of reason, favouring artistic, emotional, and spiritual approaches to truth. The imagination produced the mental images necessary for knowledge and self-reflection, and therefore played a central role in truth-seeking, although it could also lead to the worst kinds of deception and illusion.<sup>39</sup> In *RR*, the dreamer famously rejects the advice of Reason, fully devoting himself to experiencing love rather than merely glossing the words of other poets (7187-7232; Horgan 110). As a result, the imagination, and art, its product, were fundamental to the generation of meaning in dream literature. Dreaming and writing about dreams synthesised material reasoning with the power of imagination, and in this way metaphysical conflicts became articulable through metaphor, offering an alternative to philosophy's necessarily rational approach to unveiling truth.<sup>40</sup>

*RR*, the single most influential text for the medieval dream vision tradition, begins by asserting the truth of dreams, alluding to Macrobius' account (7) of Scipio's profound vision of the spheres:

Maintes genz cuident qu'en songe

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<sup>38</sup> Winthrop Wetherbee, 'The Theme of Imagination in Medieval Poetry and the Allegorical Figure "Genius"', *Medievalia et Humanistica*, 7 (1976), 45-64 (p. 45).

<sup>39</sup> Lynch, *High Medieval Dream Vision*, p. 32.

<sup>40</sup> H. Theodore Silverstein, 'The Fabulous Cosmogony of Bernardus Silvestris', *Modern Philology*, 46/2 (1948), 92-116 (p. 116) (Discussed by Lynch, p. 15).

N'ait se fable non et mençoſge.  
Mais on puet tel ſonge ſongier  
Qui ne ſont mie mençoſgier,  
Ainz ſont après bien aparant. (1-5)

[...] ai ge creance  
Que ſonge ſont ſenſfiance  
Des piens au genz et des anuiz,  
Que li plusor ſongentde nuiz  
Maintes choſes covertement  
Que l'en voit puis apertement. (15-20)

Some ſay that there is nothing in dreams but lies and fables; however, one may have dreams which are not in the leaſt deceitful, but which later become clear. [...] I am confident that a dream may ſignify the good and ill that may befall people, for many people dream things ſecretly, at night, which are later ſeen openly. (Horgan 3)

Guillaume de Lorris ſtates that the enſuing dream, which is beautiful and pleaſing (27), is entirely truthful, for it has come true (28-30) and he recounts the dream in verſe at the God of Love's command (31-33). The dream is not only truthful but divinely endorsed, and its wiſdom will be apparent even as the experience is translated into the enjoyable verſe art form.

Another theme that is preſent in many philoſophical allegories and dream viſions is the value of the arts for their edifying effect on the imagination. Procreation and artistic compoſition are the two generative abilities of mankind. It is through the former that he fulfills his natural duty (as is one of the central themes of *DPN*, while the latter is characteriſed in ſome texts as a crude imitation of the divine power to create life. Jean de Meun writes that men uſe art in order to imitate Nature's creative capacity, but for men to create life is impoſſible: Art merely aſpires to Nature's ſuperior ſkill (16036-8; Horgan 248). Texts of theſe genres often reveal the limitations of art, eſpecially when portraying marvellous and divine experience, but art is nevertheless the means by which ſuch experiences are conveyed to others, even when marvellous experience is ineffable. The indeliſcribability topos is uſed often, as in *RR*, when Jean gives up thinking and writing about Nature, for ſhe is "lovely beyond [his] comprehension" ["Tan teſt bele que plus n'en ſé"] (16236; Horgan 251).

The implied ſolution is figurative language, for the tale reſumes its allegorical mode, detailing Nature's confeſſion to Genius. The creative power of the imagination was channeled in *RR* and *DPN*

through the divine character Genius, a personification of *ingenium*, the mental faculty *ingenium*, which seeks out or investigates new knowledge so that one may “know unknowables” [“ingenium est vis ea animae, sive intentio, qua anima se extendit et exercet ad incognitorum cognitionem”], according to *De spiritu et anima*.<sup>41</sup> In the *Poetria nova*, Geoffrey of Vinsauf (fl. 1200) elucidated the rhetorical significance of *ingenium*, comparing the mental faculty which enables the poetic presentation of ideas (through amplification and abbreviation) to the use of fire in rendering hard materials like wax malleable (ll. 213-9).<sup>42</sup> Jean thus demonstrates, through example, the power of figurative language in describing truth, as Reason outlines to the lover: the “secrets of philosophy” [“secrez de philosophie”] are delightfully and profitably expressed in fabulous narrative, the “integuments” [“integumenz”] of the poets (7167-74; 7177-80; Horgan 109). Ultimately, however, Jean leaves the exact interpretation of his dream open, in what would become typical dream vision fashion. The senses, and the arts that engage them, are the means by which humans view and make sense of reality, and as some dream visions show, art and illusion—presented as part of dreams and in the sense that dreams themselves are elaborate art works—can be used to express truths that purely descriptive discourse cannot.

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<sup>41</sup> Alcher de Clairvaux *De spiritu et anima*, cap. 11, col. 787, ln. 31; translated by Lynch, *High Medieval Dream Vision*, p. 36.

<sup>42</sup> Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, in *Les Arts Poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe Siècle*, ed. Edmond Faral (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1962), 197-262; Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, trans. M. F. Nims (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1967).

### *Argument Structure*

The general focus of the following chapters is on the use of musical and visual motifs, themes, and literary techniques that adapt aspects of music and vision, in Middle English dream poetry. The analysis treats first sound and then vision. Each part contains an introduction tracing the philosophical, literary, and practical context and how these different strands converge in specific dream poems. A range of antique and medieval sources are drawn upon for relevant context, including philosophical, literary, theological, mystical, and natural scientific works, as well as practical guides to musical performance. These strands are elucidated through the commentaries on the *Timaeus* made by Calcidius and Proclus; the influential blend of Neoplatonism and theology in the works of Augustine; Latin philosophical allegory and liberal arts treatises, which comment upon the relationship between humanity and the divine; and the French analogues of Middle English dream poetry, particularly the *RR*, the works of Guillaume de Machaut, and practical guides to the arts of music and poetry. The Middle English dream visions—Chaucer’s *Book of the Duchess* (*BD*), *HF*, *PF*, James I’s *KQ*, and the anonymous vision *Pearl*—all fall under the general category of philosophical vernacular dream visions and courtly love visions.

The two senses and arts are interrelated and mutually illuminating. Chapters on music and sound are placed before those treating vision and art. This reflects the fact that the principle of harmony precedes the creation of all visible matter in Neoplatonist cosmology. Music was not primarily thought of as melody, but the science of mathematical ratio; an idea which derived from the extensive discourse in the *Timaeus* on the creation of the universe according to specific proportions, which together produce an abstract, celestial harmony reflective of perfect cosmological order. (Macrobius’ detail that Scipio actually hears the sound of the spheres is noteworthy in this respect, as the following chapter argues.) The universe is presented in the *Timaeus* as a harmonious structure, with its constituent structures, life forms, and their capacities each reflective of this universal harmony, and

it is this harmony, which is synonymous with divine love, that rules all. It is also possible to argue for the pre-existence of light, as the metaphor for God, who created harmony, though emanationist theories of creation (which describe the transformation of divine light into visible and corporeal form) rely on the principle of an ordered universe.<sup>43</sup>

There are of course substantial differences between the faculties of hearing and sight, and the expressive qualities of the arts that pertain to each. To explore each of these fully would be beyond the remit of this thesis, which focuses on significant ways in which theoretical and aesthetic concepts relating to music and visuality occur in select Middle English dream visions and their analogues. Both senses can profoundly affect the human body and soul, for better or for worse: although the arts can serve an ethical purpose, there is scepticism about their potential for misrepresentation, deceit, and seduction of the bodily senses. Sonorous music, as attested by Aristotle, Plato, Augustine, Boethius, and others, can conjure emotions such as lust and anger in a listener. However, as Wimsatt indicates, “[a]n important consequence of a mathematical conception of music is that mimetic or expressive properties were not attributed to music.”<sup>44</sup> (“Expressive”, in this sense, refers to concepts, as opposed to general emotions.) Many dream visions refer to sonorous or abstract music to present ideas relating to harmony and love, but they also rely upon the symbolism of figural description. There is a wealth of critical studies about the use of music and about art in dream poetry, but there are no comparative approaches. By considering both topics, this thesis aims to present a more detailed picture of the relationship between the harmonies that underly all life, and how dreaming—and writing about dreams—extends conventional methods of expression and perception, to create multivalent forms of truth: abstract and crafted, personal and universal.

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<sup>43</sup> This is discussed in the introduction to visual ideas.

<sup>44</sup> James I. Wimsatt, ‘Natural Music in Middle French Verse and Chaucer’, in *Essays on the Art of Chaucer’s Verse*, ed. Alan T. Gaylord (New York: Routledge, 2001), 229-65 (p. 238).

The texts under consideration (as opposed to the more topically satirical or sociopolitical kind of dream vision) have been chosen for extended analysis because they powerfully address issues relating to various kinds of emotional, artistic, and transcendental truth, and highlight these themes with reference to metaphors for the arts. Music is explored in relation to ideas of audible and inaudible harmony, ratio, and concord, but also *amusical* elements like percussive noise, cacophony, and discord, meaningful and meaningless sounds (including the categories of *vox*), French lyric narrative (including theories of emotional *sentement* and *entendement*), and polyphony and polyvocality. The analysis of vision and visual art draws upon the themes of *ekphrasis*, light symbolism, *perspectiva*, illusion, reflection, visual fantasy, and *mimesis*, as well as general lapidary and colour symbolism. Together, the treatment of these themes in dream poetry allows insight into the extent to which human perception of nature and art can lead to truth, and the dream poets' self-conscious presentation of marvellous events under the conceit of a thing "truly dreamed" or otherwise yielding truth from interpretation.

These dream visions are also highly experimental: from *BD* to *KQ*, each of the texts treated in this study uses the ideas of music and or art in a distinctive way. Although all of these texts either emulate or borrow musical, artistic, and narrative material from French *dits*, Latin allegories, and other dream visions (and some more so than others), they all transform the capabilities of music and art, each staking a unique claim within the deeply psychological and multimodal philosophical and courtly dream vision corpus. They illuminate the dangers of human artistic creation as well as its potential strengths. We can assume the role of Daedalus, struck down by his own godlike ingenuity, after whom the revolving labyrinth of *HF* is named, or Pygmalion, the sculptor whose true love is rewarded by the gods when the statue of his beloved is brought to life, and whose story is told at a pivotal point of *RR* and discussed in the chapter on visual theories.



### *Theoretical Considerations*

Freud, the best known of dream psychologists, drew upon the theory of dream symbols, or “manifest content” in the unconscious as creating a protective barrier around the consciousness in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900).<sup>45</sup> His content-based approach to dreams (analysing a dream according to what one dreams *about*) is in keeping with pre-modern ideas. His theories of wordplay and displacement are also useful in relation to allegory.<sup>46</sup> Some psychoanalytical criticisms of medieval dream poetry have contributed to this study. The literary technique of *parataxis* (the splitting of the narrator into poet and dreamer), perspectival shifts, and the merging of self and other in dream poetry<sup>47</sup> may be interpreted in terms of Freud’s Id, Ego, and Superego,<sup>48</sup> though I have opted for a reading of the narrative “I” in the context of French lyric. As Horowitz argues in reference to Chaucerian allegory, “multiplicitous subjectivity” and intertextuality are characteristic of his style.<sup>49</sup> The pre-*somnium* content of dream visions often presents the psychological experience of the narrator, who reads a book before falling asleep, and the ensuing dream echoes and transfigures, through shifts in perspective and literary styles, the initial problem, externalising and then recollecting it into a new imaginary form. Psychoanalytical trauma theory, which suggests trauma may be healed by restructuring fragmented memories, is a comparable idea. Lastly, Lacan’s model of the development of the “I”, which includes his theory of the “mirror stage”, may be applied to moments of literal and psychological self-reflection in dream poetry, namely the Mirror of Narcissus in *RR*.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> See Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey, ed. Angela Richards (London: Penguin, 1991), ch. XII.

<sup>46</sup> On wordplay in ‘dream-work’, see *Interpretation of Dreams*, IV; on displacement, V-VI, esp. VI.b.

<sup>47</sup> Claire Barbetti, *Eklebrastic Medieval Visions: A New Discussion in Interarts Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 23.

<sup>48</sup> See Sigmund Freud, ‘The Ego and the Id’, in *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (New York: Norton, 1989), 628-60.

<sup>49</sup> Deborah Horowitz, ‘An Aesthetic of Permeability: Three Transcapes of the “Book of the Duchess”’, *The Chaucer Review* 39/3 (2005), 259-279 (pp. 260-61).

<sup>50</sup> Jacques Lacan, ‘The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience’, in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), 1-7.

Merleau-Ponty's (1908-1961) theory of phenomenology may be applied to musical and visual experience in dream poetry. He theorises the concept of an "objective" world distinct from the noumenal "thing in itself" and beyond the limits of personal, subjective perception.<sup>51</sup> Representations of dream states may be read as playing, in philosophical terms, with the idea of connecting the phenomenal and the noumenal, which also extends to medieval skepticism of human thought, sense-perception, and imagination, and the presentation of dreamers as unreliable narrators. In an earlier work, *The Structure of Behavior*, Merleau-Ponty writes, "[l]aws have meaning only as a means of conceptualising the perceived world."<sup>52</sup> Meaning becomes possible as a culmination of perceptions, or a *gestalt*, and these meanings are subject to change. As Toadvine summarises, "rather than a transcendental ego, Merleau-Ponty speaks of a "transcendental field", emphasizing that reflection always has a situated and partial perspective as a consequence of being located within the field on which it reflects."<sup>53</sup> This explains the various subjectivities, misunderstandings, and illusions that are possible in the everyday act of perception. These, however, are not necessarily shortcomings. Part of the objective knowledge of reality, for Merleau-Ponty the ultimate goal of consciousness is self-consciousness of one's perceptive faculties and limits.<sup>54</sup> This theory is useful in relation to the relationship between poetic or artistic description and reality, and particularly in terms of the problem of authority, as in *HF*. Carl Stumpf's (1848-1936) proto-phenomenological ideas about music as an amalgamation of sounds, both physically and in the hearer's perceptual consciousness (or as a *gestalt*) is significant in relation to the medieval presentation of music and dreams as cumulative experiences,

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<sup>51</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'The Crisis of Understanding', in *Adventures of the Dialectic*, trans. Joseph Bein (London: Heinemann, 1974), 9-29 (11).

<sup>52</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behaviour*, trans. Aiden. L. Fisher (London: Methuen, 1965), p. 145.

<sup>53</sup> Ted Toadvine, 'Maurice Merleau-Ponty', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, online edition (Stanford, CA: Metaphysics Research Lab, Center for the Study of Language and Information, Stanford University), updated quarterly, entry first published September 2016 <<http://plato.stanford.edu>> [accessed 24 February 2018]. (This edition hereafter abbreviated to *SEP*.)

<sup>54</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Structure of Behaviour*, pp. 124-8.

as well as polyphonic performance, which parallels the effect of multivalent allegorical symbolism.<sup>55</sup> Smith's theory that music is a communal, intersubjective experience that requires dialogical exchange whereby music is "made" by the listener being an active participant in the process complements my reading of *BD*.<sup>56</sup>

Although the thesis does not adopt a specific intermedial approach, this is the most essential theoretical perspective. Intermediality is a relatively new discipline, and the only book-length study that takes an interarts approach to medieval dream visions is Barbetti's *Eklebrastic Medieval Visions* (2011), which mainly focuses on poetry and vision. In fact, Kolve rejected the use of interart criticism in English medieval studies.<sup>57</sup> Theories of intermediality differ among critics,<sup>58</sup> though Rajewsky offers a useful summary that lends itself to medieval literary criticism: it involves the crossing of borders between different media, generally the result of historically changing possibilities for intermedial practices, such as the invention of radio, television, and cinema—or here, musical notation, polyphonic composition, lyric insertion, allegory, *ekphrasis*, *et cetera*.<sup>59</sup> She outlines three related subcategories: transposition (of one art form into another), combination (as in multimedia, mixed media, or other forms of media integration), and intermedial references (the evocation, thematisation, or imitation of another "conventionally distinct medium through the use of its own media-specific means").<sup>60</sup> All three are applicable to medieval literature and appear in this thesis: transposition as

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<sup>55</sup> Carl Stumpf, *The Origins of Music*, ed. and trans. David Trippet (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). See in this edition, Stumpf, 'A Self-Portrait', 189-252 (232-9) for his most important concepts on the phenomenology of music; 'The Origins of Music', 31-185 (pp. 103-5) for his definitions of homophony, organum, polyphony, and harmonic music.

<sup>56</sup> F. Joseph Smith, *The Experiencing of Musical Sound* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1979), p. 111.

<sup>57</sup> V. A. Kolve, 'Chaucer and the Visual Arts', in *Writers and Their Background: Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. Derek Brewer (London: Bell, 1974) 290-320 (p. 291).

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, *Media Borders, Multimodality and Intermediality*, ed. Lars Elleström (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

<sup>59</sup> Irina O. Rajewsky, 'Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality', *Intermedialités*, 6 (2005), 43-64 (p. 50).

<sup>60</sup> Rajewsky, 'Intermediality', pp. 51-3.

*enargeia* and *ekphrasis*, combination in lyrics with musical notation or in fixed forms (and illuminated manuscripts, a topic too extensive to discuss in detail), and references such as lyric grafting.

## Chapter Outline

After the introduction, the first main chapter outlines relevant theoretical contexts of speculative and practical music, from the mathematical definition of music and harmony in the *Timaieus*, to Calcidius' and Proclus' respective commentaries on it, which conceived of music as variously incorporeal or corporeal. The evolution of Neoplatonist ideas of music, in relation to themes of embodied sound, harmony, voice, concord, time, and the liberal arts, is highlighted in the works of Augustine, Macrobius, Martianus Capella, and Boethius. The next part considers significant developments in the performance and reception of music in medieval France in relation to polyphonic composition, *sentement* and *entendement*, the lyric "I", and lyric narrative with reference to Guillaume de Machaut and Eustache Deschamps. The second chapter follows with an analysis of music (including harmony, discord, noise, and *vox*) in Chaucer's *BD*, with an emphasis on meaningful sound and lyric composition; *HF* on the symbolism of corporeal speech; *PF* in relation to harmony, polyphony, and discordant concord; and concluding with the generation of earthly harmony from discord in James I's *KQ*.

The thesis then turns to vision and the visual arts, with the third chapter's extension of the previous discussion of philosophy and allegory to natural philosophical, theological, and mystical theories of vision and the visual, including optics, images of the memory and imagination, spiritual contemplation, attitudes toward natural creation and art, illumination, and literary techniques of visualisation (*enargeia* and *ekphrasis*). These themes are elucidated in the works of Bernardus Silvestris and Alan of Lille, and *RR*, through the myths of Narcissus and Pygmalion, and the Mirror of Narcissus and the carbuncle in the Spring of Life. This is followed by the final main chapter, which analyses the roles of vision and figurative art in *BD* in relation to creative recollection and poetry's ability to inform and be informed by visual experience; *HF* in terms of the subjectivity and instability of perception, and the visualisation of abstract processes of motion and transformation, with passing reference to

the *Confessio Amantis*, the *Legend of Good Women*, and the *Temple of Glass*; and concluding with an examination of contemplation, symbolism, illumination, and Grosseteste's theory of multiplication of *species* in *Pearl*. A brief conclusion recapitulates the argument's main themes and gestures toward future areas of interest in interarts studies of medieval dream poetry.

## MUSIC THEORY FROM NEOPLATONISM TO LYRIC NARRATIVE

The present chapter is a brief history of significant musical ideas that informed and influenced the use of musical material, symbolism, and themes in Neoplatonist philosophical allegory and Middle English dream poetry. The divine and mortal applications of music may be seen as the backdrop for theoretical approaches to music from antiquity to the Middle Ages. Medieval musical theory was heavily indebted to Platonist and Neoplatonist theories of creation. From the *Timaeus*, classical creation theories describe music's divine origin as in the song of the cosmic spheres. Harmony and song are explained as manifestations of the numerical ratios underlying existence. As such, celestial music represents godly perfection. According to Plato, the divine Demiurge creates a harmonious being, the World-Soul, entrusting it to populate the universe with living things that resemble, albeit imperfectly, essence and cognitive capacities (34b10-36d7; 41c2-3; 43e8-44b7).<sup>61</sup> Harmony links the lowest mortal creation ultimately to the divine Creator, whether portrayed as a Hellenic or Christian God by classical and medieval commentators, as the following discussions of Calcidius and Proclus show. Augustine's writings on music extend Neoplatonist themes of harmony and order, integrating them firmly into Christian theology, as well as the liberal art of music. Macrobius' *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* consolidates Neoplatonist cosmology, highlighting the significance of harmony in the universal framework and introducing the dream as a potential medium for human understanding of divine truths. Furthermore, Macrobius' work was crucial to the development of a literary tradition of dreams and cosmology. His employment of an allegorical dream narrative becomes the standard exemplar for medieval writers of dream visions such as *RR*, the works of Chaucer, *KQ*, and *Pearl*.

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<sup>61</sup> English translations of Plato's *Timaeus* are from Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. Donald J. Zeyl (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000).

Following the Neoplatonist discourse focused largely upon the heavenly nature of music, theorists such as Martianus Capella and Boethius elaborated on the idea of human music, vocal and instrumental, as part of a more general defense of the liberal arts. Treatises such as Martianus' *Seven Liberal Arts* systematised each art, and often employed common terminology across subjects, positing links between music and the verbal and visual arts. Although theorists from antiquity to the end of the Middle Ages had discussed *musica speculativa* and *practica*—the harmonious structure of the cosmos and all created matter, and what we would now recognise as musical theory and performance, respectively—there is a shift in focus from the former to the latter in terms of the human experience of music, as opposed to the suprasensory music of the divine. French texts and developments in musical form and practice, particularly from the *Ars nova* (a fourteenth-century stylistic era of music characterised by the use of musical notation and polyphony, represented by two interrelated but autonomous practices in France and northern Italy<sup>62</sup>) to the *Seconde Rhétorique* (Second Rhetoric) (a term used in late-medieval French poetic treatises or *artes poeticae* from ca. 1370-1579 to denote the use of rhetoric in verse, as opposed to prose, in the First Rhetoric<sup>63</sup>) contribute significantly to this shift, and medieval dream visions containing musical material and themes often reflect this dual theoretical and practical tradition. The Middle Ages in France further witnessed two phenomena that blended music and words, influencing the incorporation of music in dream narratives: the *troubadours* and *trouvères* blended music with vernacular narratives that employed forms, devices, and motifs common to the romance and dream vision genres, resulting in an overlap of literature and song. Devotional music also saw the development of musical notation in the Chartres School, and the increase of polyphonic composition, both of which encouraged a visual- or narrative-based idea of music.

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<sup>62</sup> *Ars nova* [Lat., new technique, new craft], in *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, ed. Don Michael Randel, 4<sup>th</sup> edn (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), *Credo Reference* < <https://search-credoreference-com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/content/title/harvdictmusic?tab=entries> > [accessed 27 February 2019]

<sup>63</sup> *Seconde Rhétorique*, in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Roland Greene, Stephen Cushman, Clare Cavanagh, et. al., 4<sup>th</sup> edn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 1281-2.



The history of musical theory when seen in relation to dream literature embraces a broad array of themes that are explored and tested in medieval dream poetry. Many of these are bilateral and to some extent reference the categories of abstract and physical; number and music; divine and human; soul and body; dream and experience; sound and text, and natural and artificial. These themes are never truly mutually exclusive, as attested by the theoretical discourse itself and its thematisation in dream literature.

Medieval music theory reflects a rich Platonic heritage. Central to this tradition are the concepts of number, ratio, and its counterpart, harmony, which are principles underlying the structure of the universe and all that it contains. Plato was influenced by the Pythagorean school (fl. 530 BCE), adopting their doctrine of transmigration and the permanence of the soul as well as the theory that numbers underlie the order of the universe.<sup>64</sup> Plato's *Timaeus* establishes a relationship between harmony, the universe, and the soul, paving the way for a rich tradition of intellectual discourse about music in philosophical, religious, and secular contexts. Hollander discusses the term *harmonia* as originally meaning "a fitting or joining together of discrete and disparate entities"; a purely mathematical notion differing from our contemporary association of the term with sound, which according to Hollander, is "conditioned by our experience of polyphonic music".<sup>65</sup> He explains that ancient Greek term *harmonia* applies to "relative proportion, of an order that consists in the ratios of quantities to each other, rather than of a notion of blending that depends on the *simultaneous* effects of separate or even warring elements."<sup>66</sup> Indeed, the Greek term *mousike* "designated neither a linguistic nor a tonal art but the craft of composing song, considered as a unified entity".<sup>67</sup> The word is also derived from the name of the Muses and is associated with the *techne* (the activity, art, or craft) belonging to a particular Muse.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, the account of man's relationship to music in the *Timaeus* assigns a dignity to humankind as participating in the universal harmony that governs all. It presents mankind as using his gift of reason and the model of divine intelligence to emulate the

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<sup>64</sup> Michael Haren, *Medieval Thought: The Western Intellectual Tradition from Antiquity to the Thirteenth Century*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Houndmills and London: Macmillan, 1992), p. 8.

<sup>65</sup> John Hollander, *The Untuning of the Sky: Ideas of Music in English Poetry 1500-1700* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 26. I will return to the rise of polyphonic music in the Middle Ages.

<sup>66</sup> Hollander, pp. 26-7.

<sup>67</sup> Hollander, p. 13.

<sup>68</sup> Herbert M. Schueller, *The Idea of Music: An Introduction to Musical Aesthetics in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1988), p. 5.

celestial generation of concord from discord when creating his own music, so that he may restore harmony to his soul (Cal. 47d).<sup>69</sup> This prefigures later poetic dramatisations of manmade discord, the central theme of Alan of Lille's twelfth-century philosophical allegory, *DPN*, for example.

While Plato's *Timaeus* was not directly known to the medieval west in its original form, its transmission in Latin commentaries was profoundly influential. The early part of the treatise describing the formation of the universe from chaos and the creation of souls was the central focus in the commentaries of Calcidius and Proclus.<sup>70</sup> Details of Calcidius' birth, education, and life are sparse, however his translation and commentary on the *Timaeus* profoundly shaped medieval Neoplatonism.<sup>71</sup> More is known about Proclus of Athens (412-485 CE), who for almost fifty years was the head of the Platonic Academy in Athens, and whose body of work preserved and defended Hellenic thought within a predominantly Christian society.<sup>72</sup> The commentaries of Calcidius and Proclus are products of different historical and intellectual traditions which, I will argue, shape the medieval reception of the *Timaeus* in different ways. Although the Calcidian text was preeminent, the Proclean one indirectly influenced medieval dream vision writing via the works of Macrobius and Pseudo-Dionysius.

Calcidius' translation and commentary up to 53c of the *Timaeus*, believed to be written after circa 325 CE,<sup>73</sup> was the only Platonic dialogue known to the medieval Latin-speaking west until the twelfth century.<sup>74</sup> Calcidius' work resembles the so-called period of Middle Platonism (c. 80 BC – 220

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<sup>69</sup> See Schueller, p. 35.

<sup>70</sup> In addition to these, a couple of other texts of Platonist thought were accessible in the medieval West. See Joscelyn Godwin, *The Harmony of the Spheres: A Sourcebook of the Pythagorean Tradition in Music* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions International, 1993), p. 60.

<sup>71</sup> John Magee, 'Introduction' to Calcidius, *On Plato's Timaeus*, ed. and trans. John Magee (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), p. viii. Magee also discusses the ambiguity of Calcidius' religious views, for terms explicitly related to Christianity and paganism alike are absent from his works (pp. x-xi).

<sup>72</sup> Christoph Helmig and Carlos Steel, 'Proclus', in *SEP* (first published March 2011, substantive revision April 2015) [accessed 24 February 2019]

<sup>73</sup> Magee, 'Introduction', p. xxi.

<sup>74</sup> Haren, p. 30.

CE), which was associated with the reconciliation of Plato's and Aristotle's ideas of the Mind as both the Good and the Unmoved Mover, and emphasised the transcendence of Mind and its relationship to the material world through intermediaries such as the *logos* and World-Soul.<sup>75</sup> The peak of popularity for Calcidius' commentary is believed to be from 975 to 1125, after which the commentary is replicated about half as much as the translation due to its replacement with "the comprehensive glosses of Bernard of Chartres, William of Conches, and various anonymous twelfth-century glossators", and by which time the *Timaeus* was well assimilated into scholastic thought.<sup>76</sup> Prior to the introduction of new Aristotelian texts from Greek and Arabic routes, the writers of the Chartres School (ca. 1125-50) were the authorities of Neoplatonism in the Latin west.<sup>77</sup> Scheller explains that it was in the Chartres School that "the views of the Church Fathers, and of St Augustine in particular, were related to ideas set out by Plato in his *Timaeus*."<sup>78</sup> Theoreticians associated with the Chartres School, Thierry of Chartres, Clarembald of Arras, William of Conches, Bernardus Silvestris, Gilbert of Poitiers, and Alan of Lille, began to build a general cosmology based principally upon Calcidius' *Timaeus* and other available ancient writings, foremost of these being Boethius' *On Arithmetic*, *On Music*, and *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Martianus Capella's *On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury*, and Macrobius' *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*.<sup>79</sup> The works of Bernardus Silvestris, Alan of Lille, Boethius, and Macrobius in turn provided much of the inspiration for the English dream poets of the medieval period.

The five main paths of the *Timaeus*' transmission have long been traced to the Byzantine tradition, the Arabic tradition, the mystical writings of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (fl. ca. 500),

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Paul Edward Dutton, 'Medieval Approaches to Calcidius', in *Plato's Timaeus as Cultural Icon*, ed. Gretchen J. Reydams-Schils (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 183-205 (p. 184). For print editions of these glosses, see Dutton's footnote 7, p. 200. On the popularity of Calcidius' commentary in the ninth to twelfth centuries, see Reydams-Schils, 'Introduction' to *Plato's Timaeus as Cultural Icon*, p. 9.

<sup>77</sup> Haren, p. 116.

<sup>78</sup> Scheller, p. 13.

<sup>79</sup> Haren, pp. 114-5.

and Latin translations of Proclus' works by William of Moerbeke in the late thirteenth century.<sup>80</sup> A version of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, the *Liber de causis*, attributed to Aristotle, reached the Latin west via the Arab world.<sup>81</sup> Neoplatonist ideas reached the Middle Ages through more indirect routes as well. The other main commentary on the *Timaeus* for the Middle Ages was written in the fifth century by the Athenian Neoplatonist Proclus.<sup>82</sup> While Calcidius' commentary is commonly viewed as the most accessible and relatively direct account of the *Timaeus* in the Middle Ages, the impact of Proclus, described by the *SEP* as "the most authoritative philosopher of late antiquity", and playing a "crucial role in the transmission of Platonic philosophy from antiquity to the Middle Ages" is overlooked by literary critics.<sup>83</sup> He also influenced the late Neoplatonic schools of Athens and Alexandria.<sup>84</sup>

His medieval impact was primarily through the mystical writings of Pseudo-Dionysius (fl. ca. 500), whose corpus was translated into Latin in the ninth century.<sup>85</sup> Via Pseudo-Dionysius, Proclus' thought was adopted by the philosopher John Scotus Eriugena and the German Dominicans Meister Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa.<sup>86</sup> The transmission of Pseudo-Dionysian Neoplatonist theology is significant because, as Perl indicates, it was "the principal channel by which Neoplatonism – a more authentic and philosophically sophisticated Neoplatonism than Augustine's – entered more "mainstream" medieval philosophy."<sup>87</sup> Pseudo-Dionysian theory will be discussed in relation to vision in *Pearl*. Following the Dominicans, and favouring Proclus' resistance to Aristotelianism, Berthold of Moosburg viewed Proclean philosophy as representative of Platonism.<sup>88</sup> A large, christianised

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<sup>80</sup> Laurence Jay Rosán, *The Philosophy of Proclus: The Final Phase of Ancient Thought* (New York: Cosmos Greek-American Printing Co., 1949), p. 222.

<sup>81</sup> Haren, p. 34.

<sup>82</sup> Helmig and Steel, 'Proclus', *SEP*.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Eric D. Perl, 'Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite', in *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jorge J. E. Gracia and Timothy B. Noone (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 540-549.

<sup>86</sup> Perl, p. 548.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Bruce Millem, 'Berthold of Moosburg', in *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, ed. Gracia and Noone, 215-16.

commentary on Proclus' *Elements of Theology* is his sole surviving work and the only known commentary on Proclus produced in the Middle Ages.<sup>89</sup>

It is debatable whether Proclus' ideas were known directly by Boethius (who was likely to have been educated in Athens or Alexandria), but there is evidence of at least his (indirect) knowledge of the writings of Proclus' teacher, Syrianus.<sup>90</sup> Rosán indicates Proclean thought was “utilized not only by such mystical groups as the School of Chartres, the Victorines, the Franciscans and the German Dominicans, but also by such scholastic philosophers as Peter Lombard, Albertus Magnus and St. Thomas Aquinas”.<sup>91</sup> The extent to which medieval philosophy, theology, scholasticism, and mysticism reflects Calcidian or Proclean Neoplatonism is subtle, but worth considering with respect to the different presentations of music in dream poetry.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> John Magee, 'Boethius', in *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, ed. Gracia and Noone, 217-226 (217).

<sup>91</sup> Rosán, p. 224.

The following section is a brief contextual overview of Plato's theory of universal harmony as found in Calcidius' commentary, followed by some significant departures in Proclus' work pertinent to the medieval idea of music. Neoplatonist philosophy concurs with Platonism in defining harmony in terms of pure mathematical ratio, and describing the construction of the universe according to the harmonious ordering and mixing of different types of Being (Cal. 34c-37c, Cal. 32).<sup>92</sup> Harmony is indicative of divine perfection and, significantly, the modelling of all forms of mortal life after such perfection (Cal. 41a-e). The creation of the universe is explained by the eponymous character as the Demiurge's imposition of order upon primordial chaos (Cal. 30a).

The supreme being is portrayed as a divine artist: Calcidius calls him "craftsman and constructor" ["*opifexque et fabricator*"] (Cal. 29a).<sup>93</sup> Whether Calcidius was a Christian is still open to question: some scholars consider his work a Christianised form of the *Timaeus*.<sup>94</sup> Magee notes that the terms such as Christian, pagan, and gentile "are conspicuously absent from his work"<sup>95</sup> and that he "makes no explicit attempt either to harmonize the *Timaeus* and Genesis or to make one refute the other".<sup>96</sup> He seems at the very least to draw upon Christianity and pagan sources as constituent parts of a wisdom tradition.<sup>97</sup> Calcidius' theological ambiguity did not inhibit Christian interpretations of Neoplatonism which helped inform the medieval Latin Neoplatonist tradition: Steel states that "Christian thinkers, such as Ambrose (c. 339–397), Marius Victorinus (c. 280–365), and above all

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<sup>92</sup> All Calcidius references are to the parallel text edition: Calcidius, *On Plato's Timaeus*, ed. and trans. John Magee (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016). References to his translation of the *Timaeus* are presented with his Plato references (i.e., I.30b) while extracts from the commentary are cited according to section number. All section references are preceded by "Cal." or "Pr." to distinguish between Plato's *Timaeus* and Proclus' *Commentary*.

<sup>93</sup> Also see Cal. 28c. For more on Calcidius' rendering of Plato's "craftsman god" ("*deus optifex*"), see Magee, 'Introduction', p. xii.

<sup>94</sup> For an analysis of critical views, see Dutton, 'Medieval Approaches to Calcidius', pp. 185-188.

<sup>95</sup> Magee, 'Introduction', p. xi.

<sup>96</sup> Magee, 'Introduction', p. xiii.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

Augustine [...] considered Plato closer to Christian faith than any other philosopher.”<sup>98</sup> For the Church Fathers, there were many transferable Neoplatonist ideas that could be used to illuminate the theology of Creation and were then widely accepted in the Middle Ages as axiomatic Neoplatonism, particularly the creation of man in the image of God and the relationship between soul and body. As Godwin explains, Calcidius “touches on the very points at which early Christianity and paganism meet: the compound nature of the human being, as a triad of divine Spirit, celestial Soul, and elemental Body.”<sup>99</sup> Calcidius’ division of the *Timaeus* into two parts (on Plato’s 31c-39e and 39e-53c) also influenced the conception of the cosmos as divided into macrocosm and microcosm, and the appeal of these categories is apparent in Neoplatonist texts popular in the Middle Ages, most notably Macrobius’ *Commentary* and in the *Cosmographia* of Bernardus Silvestris. A main theme across interpretations of the *Timaeus* is that the soul, created in accordance with harmony, is the link between macrocosm and microcosm, body and spirit, divine and human. Cosmological harmony, along with the spherical construction of the universe and the conjunction of soul and body, would remain dominant theories in pagan and later Christian theoretical discourse during the Middle Ages.

The theory of harmony that became an indispensable framework for medieval attitudes toward creation, the soul, and music is first introduced in the *Timaeus*. The demiurge makes its first living creation by placing “intellect in soul and soul in body” [“intellectu in anima, porro anima in corpore locata”] (Cal. I.30b), giving birth to “the entire sphere of the living world” [“totum animantis mundi ambitum”] (Cal. I.30b). The “anima mundi”, or World-Soul, as it is usually translated, is evidence “that the sensible world is a living being endowed with intelligence because of a decree of divine providence” [“Ex quo apparet sensibilem mundum animal intellegens esse divinae providentiae sanctione”] (Cal.

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<sup>98</sup> Carlos Steel, ‘Neoplatonism’, in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Donald M. Borchert, vol. 6, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2006), 546-557 (p. 555), *Gale Virtual Reference Library* <<http://link.galegroup.com.ezphost.dur.ac.uk>> [accessed 24 February 2019]. Although Augustine pre-dates Proclus, an analysis of Augustine’s contribution to musical theory follows the section on Proclus in order to allow for a close comparison of Calcidian and Proclean Neoplatonism.

<sup>99</sup> Godwin, p. 61.



I.30b-c). It is then made “corporeal, visible, and tangible” [“corpulentus visibilisque et continguus”] (Cal. I.31b) by being united with its body according to “mode [and] harmonic measure” [“modus et congrua mensura”] (Cal. I.31c).<sup>100</sup> Significantly, its revolving movement is described as rational, and “without voice [and] sound” [“rationabilis sine voce sine sono”](Cal. I.37b). It is also a manifestation of perfect unity, described by Plato as “a symphony of proportion” such that its constituent parts cannot be undone and by Calcidius as “a harmonious proportion in the equilibrium of its parts [...] immortal and indissoluble” [“amica partium aequilibratae ratioe societatum [...] immortalis indissolubilisque”] (Pl. 32c; Cal. I.32c).

Harmony underlies the definition of the perfect, good, and beautiful put forth in the *Timaeus*. The creator is “supremely good” [“optimus”], and in order to emulate his goodness, “no room should be left for the propagation of evil” in the World-Soul [“mali porro nullius, prout eorum quae nascuntur natura fert, relinqui propaginem”] (Cal. I.29e). The movement of the World’s soul proceeds “without error” [“sine errore”], even as it circles a body that is of an “Other”, sensible, nature (Cal. I.37b-c). As Zayn argues in relation to Plato’s concept of unity in 31c2-3:

[T]he unity of the world is not simply an observed datum [...] it follows from the requirement of what is best (*kalliston* 31c2). And this unity is expressed in geometrical proportion (*analogia*, c3): since proportion is the best possible (because most unified) arrangement of diverse constituents [...]<sup>101</sup>

As mentioned above, Calcidius translates this in terms of “mode” and “harmonic measure”. This is supported by Calcidius in his translation of 34b-37c, in which he discusses the unity of contraries in terms of geometrical (i.e., harmonious) proportioning. The creation of the World-Soul (I.35a-d) involves a series of mathematical proportions involving states of Being, Other, and the Same [“substantia, diversi, et item eius quod idem vocatur”] (I.35b). These correspond to Plato’s changeless Being, the Different (or divisible), and the Same (indivisible) (35a). The process of portioning and combining the three entities results in the derivation of intervals for Calcidius and Plato (Cal. I.35b-

<sup>100</sup> See Cal. I.32d-37c for precise mathematical proportions.

<sup>101</sup> Zeyl, ‘Introduction’ to Plato, *Timaeus*, p. xxxix.

36d, Pl. 36a-d). The spherical design of the universe is explained as the ordering of intervals into nesting circles that rotate in alternate directions according to the principals of Same and Other (Cal. I.36b-c, Pl. 36c-d). The soul is given predominance over the body, though the two are combined harmoniously: “*mediae modulamine apto iugabat*” (Cal. I.36e).<sup>102</sup> Harmony is the principle which links the soul to its divine origin and enables the creation of life:

[...] *ast illa complectens caeli ultima circumfusaque eidem exteriore complexu operiensque ambitu suo ipsaque in semet convertens divinam originem auspicata est indefessae sapientisque et sine intermissione vitae.* (Cal. I.36e, (Pl. 36e))

[T]he soul, embracing the outermost reaches of heaven and being infused throughout it by virtue of its external embrace and enclosing it within its periphery and itself revolving back upon itself, inaugurated the divine beginning of a life that was untiring and wise and without intermission.

Bodies are then made visible, while souls are invisible, “and yet possessed of reason and harmony, being superior to all other intelligibles” [“*Et corpus quidem caeli sive mundi visibile factum, ipsa vero invisibilis, rationis tamen et item modulaminis compos cunctis intellegibilibus praestantior a praestantissimo auctore facta*”] (Cal. I.36e-37a). The fundamental distinction between the corporeal soul and the incorporeal body is thus inseparable from the Neoplatonic idea of harmony, and it was upon this idea that Boethius later explained music in relation to hierarchical levels of being, as will be discussed. It is thus important to calibrate our understanding of harmony as a musical phenomenon, a change in meaning which, as noted above, is associated with the rise of polyphonic music.

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<sup>102</sup> On the soul as “mistress” of the body, see I.34c.

Proclus' fifth-century *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* is an extensive and formidable work. As Baltzly notes, under Proclus, Plato's *Timaeus* 34b2-37c5 is expanded to over two hundred pages of text in a modern printed volume.<sup>103</sup> His sources and paganism, as mentioned earlier, distinguish him from Calcidius from the outset. Proclus drew upon a rich tradition of Middle Platonist and Neoplatonist philosophy, particularly that of Syrianus and Iamblichus, and significantly, a larger portion of the Platonic corpus than Calcidius had. The resulting treatise may be viewed as a fuller illustration of, among many topics, the relationship between macrocosm and microcosm and the functions of the incorporeal and corporeal parts of the universe. This is significant because the *Timaeus*, via Calcidius' commentary, was the only Platonic dialogue directly available in the Latin west until the twelfth century.

Exposition of ideas from multiple perspectives is characteristic of Proclus' approach to the *Timaeus*.<sup>104</sup> He discusses the nature of corporeality alongside music in response to the structure of the cosmic spheres. In addition to presenting numbers as mathematically and symbolically significant, his discussion of cosmic ratio is practically allegorical in contrast to Calcidius. Music, like living beings, can be both corporeal and incorporeal. Proclus elaborates on the description of the spheres given in the *Timaeus* with reference to the passage in the Vision of Er (Pl. *Republic* 617b5-8) which attributes the music of the spheres to celestial sirens (68.5-16).<sup>105</sup> Calcidius cites Plato's *Republic* in his *Commentary*,

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<sup>103</sup> Derek Baltzly, 'Introduction' to Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, 6 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007-17), IV, ed. and trans. Derek Baltzly (2009), 1-49 (p. 1). English translations of the text are from this edition; The standard Greek text is Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, ed. Ernest Diehl, Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903-6; facsimile reprint: Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1965).

<sup>104</sup> Baltzly, 'Introduction', p. 28.

<sup>105</sup> Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Republic*, vol. 1: *Essays 1-6*, ed. and trans. Dirk Baltzly, John F. Finamore, Graeme Miles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), essay 5. English translations of sections 236.20-237.14 are from Godwin, *Harmony of Spheres*, pp. 73-5; For Greek text, see Proclus, *In Platonis Rem publicam commentarii*, ed. G. Kroll, 2

though he does not include this passage. While neither Plato's *Republic* nor Proclus' Greek commentary on it were directly known in the Middle Ages, points made by Proclus in the latter text contextualise the corporeal and intellectual qualities of music put forth in his *Commentary on the Timaeus*. Proclus writes that one siren resides at each of the eight planetary spheres and sings a distinct tone, contributing to a single harmony (236.20-237.15). Because Plato states that the sirens are arranged in harmonic ratios and their movement is harmonised, Proclus states that the essence of these beings therefore is harmonic ratio, agreeing with *Timaeus* 35a-36c. Here, Proclus mentions a dichotomy of incorporeal and corporeal existence. Citing Plato's *Laws* (X.897c), he explains the celestial sirens move in a circular, incorporeal motion, "for circular movement is the image of the Intellect [...] and it is by Intellect that souls are moved in a circle" (238.5-10).<sup>106</sup> Proclus argues that Plato names them sirens "in order to show that the chord which they impose on the rings is, nevertheless, of a corporeal nature" (238.20). While all sirens produce corporeal harmony (239.10-15), celestial sirens are distinguished from terrestrial sirens, who are associated with sensual pleasure, as depicted in the twelfth book of *The Odyssey* (238.25).<sup>107</sup> There is a higher incorporeal music, however: the music of the celestial sirens is subordinate to the "intellectual harmony" of the Muses (239.10), who, as Godwin explains, reside "beyond the visible cosmos" in Olympus.<sup>108</sup> The mythologised explanation of the relationship between corporeal and incorporeal music is also present in Macrobius' *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*:

hinc Plato in *Re publica* sua cum de sphaerarum caelestium volubilitate tractaret, singulas ait Sirenas singulis orbibus insidere significans sphaerarum motu cantum numinibus exhiberi. nam Siren dea canens Graeco intellectu valet. theologi quoque novem Musas octo sphaerarum musicos cantus et unam maximam concinentiam quae confit ex omnibus esse voluerunt. (II.iii.1)

In a discussion in the *Republic* about the whirling motion of the heavenly spheres, Plato says that a Siren sits upon each of the spheres, thus indicating that by the motions of the spheres divinities were provided with song; for a singing Siren is equivalent to a god in the Greek acceptance of the word. Moreover, cosmogonists have chosen

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vols, Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Leipzig: Teubner, 1899-1901; photographic reprint: Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1965).

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. Proclus refers here to Plato, *Laws*, X.897c. See Plato, *Laws*, trans. Trevor J. Saunders, in *Plato: Complete Works*, 1318-1616.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. See *Odyssey* XII.165. Also see Godwin, pp. 427-8.

<sup>108</sup> Godwin, p. 427.

to consider the nine Muses as the tuneful song of the eight spheres and the one predominant harmony that comes from all of them.

The notion of different levels of corporeality within celestial music and the liminal space occupied by the celestial sirens (partaking in the circularity of intellect but also secondary to the abstract song of the Muses) presents the universe as a complex mixture of higher and lower qualities. Such an (albeit pagan) attitude facilitates the conception of a harmonious, interconnected cosmos, in which the mortal, sensual aspects of mankind do not prevent him categorically from contemplating and perceiving divine things. This attitude towards human gifts—of thought, reason, and perception—is echoed in Cicero’s and Macrobius’ descriptions of the audible music of the spheres, and the latter’s claim that transcendental truth may be glimpsed in dreams. As later chapters argue, it is also present in theories of contemplation in which knowledge of God begins with meditation upon visible images.

Both Macrobius and Proclus drew upon Porphyry: Baltzly indicates that although Proclus never explicitly mentions Porphyry in his discussion of harmony, “it remains a distinct possibility that the didactic portions of Proclus’ text reflect the content of Porphyry’s earlier work.”<sup>109</sup> In his Commentary on the *Timaeus*, Proclus states that the different types of harmony—intellectual, psychic, and sensible—are bound together by the same ratios that unite the divine Intellect, soul, and body (i.e., the monad, representing the primordial Intellect of the One, the tetrad, which pertains to the soul’s harmony, and the decad, which represents the harmony of the cosmos) (Pr. III.ii, 207.15-30). The symbolism associated with the numbers one to ten is believed by Baltzly to be based upon the *Theology of Arithmetic*, a treatise attributed to Iamblichus but potentially incorporating parts of numerological writings by Nichomachus of Gerasa and Anatolius.<sup>110</sup> According to Proclus, then, the universe is bound together in multiple layers of harmony, resulting in an understanding of all beings

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<sup>109</sup> Baltzly, ‘Introduction’, p. 17. Also See Stahl’s ‘Introduction’ to Macrobius’ *Commentary*, p. 24. Stahl also provides the above cross-reference to Porphyry via Proclus, 205E in Diehl’s edition (*In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, ed. E. Diehl, 3 vols (Leipzig: Bibliotheca Teubneriana, 1903-06) vol. 2 (1904), p. 214 (*On Tim.* 35B) <<https://archive.org/details/proclidiadochii00diehgoog/page/n222>> [accessed 26 February 2019].

<sup>110</sup> Baltzly, ‘Introduction’, p. 17.

apart from the One as complex combinations of divine, semidivine, and corporeal proportions and essences. He also viewed harmony in relation to procession and reversion: the harmony of the Intellect, soul, and cosmos are all as the *Timaeus* states, participants in harmony and *themselves* harmonies (Pl. 37a1, Pr. III.ii, 207.25). Thus, Proclus maintains that the soul cannot completely be explained by mathematics alone, and that there are multiple layers of being and harmony necessitates a lifting up of one's soul to apprehend and take part in superior harmony:

Let the manner of exegesis of the soul's essence be naturally consonant with the essence (*ousia*) of the soul itself: You must free yourself from the [mere] appearance of harmony, and lift yourself up to the substantive (*ousiódēs*) and immaterial harmony, and be led back from images to the paradigms [of these images]. For the concordances that flow through our ears and which consist in soundings differ entirely from the concordance of what is life-giving and intellectual. (Pr. III.ii, 195.10-16)

Proclus endorses the view that harmony is both material and immaterial and that the unity of the cosmos enables mortals to gain higher understanding through self-reflection. The corporeal and incorporeal facets of the spheres, harmony, and human thought again return to the universal, life-giving harmony created by the combination of Being, Sameness, and Difference. As such, materiality and immateriality contribute to whole entities as well as complete understanding.

Proclus' sophisticated explanation of human understanding is explainable in terms of the numerology underlying his theory of the relationship between ideal and material essence, and the human soul as the bridge between both forms of existence (Pl. 35a-d, Pr. III.ii, 117-119). Proclus explains that Plato relates the intellect to the monad because it is indivisible, while the dyad pertains to body and concludes that the soul is both numbers simultaneously, since it is "intermediate" between intellect and body (III.ii, 196-197). These concepts are also related to bound and infinity: The monad, or intellect, represents "Limit" and is indivisible, while the "Unlimited" is associated with material bodies that are divisible into infinity (III.ii, 197.1-5). Proclus thus transcends the Platonic treatment of ratio and addresses the numerological significance of the specific numbers associated with the cosmos and the creation of the soul. The essence of the soul, according to Proclus, is a five-fold mixture of Being, harmony, form, power, and activity (III.ii, 126.20-127.5), the number five being the

arithmetic mean of the Pythagorean decad.<sup>111</sup> The Pythagorean character of his numerology is paralleled by the numerological discourse in the first part of Macrobius' *Commentary*.<sup>112</sup> Proclus' emphasis on the soul as medium between the human intellect and body may be related to Macrobius' statement that some dreams provide a temporary liberation of the soul from the body, enabling mortals to glimpse the divine. This is the focus of Macrobius' *Commentary* and the central idea underlying his argument for the necessity of dream interpretation in elucidating corporeally veiled symbols of divine truth.

Proclus discusses harmony in relation to Plato's (originally tripartite) account of the mixing and partitioning of the soul's parts. In a major departure from his source, he creates an association between the process and the Hellenic gods, Apollo and Dionysus, concluding "since the Demiurge simultaneously encompasses within himself the causes of both of these gods, he also divides the soul into parts and harmonises it" (Pr. III.ii, 197.15-25). This injection of the classical pantheon into the *Timaeus* is part of a larger movement, beginning in the fourth century with Iamblichus, in which Neoplatonic philosophers defended Hellenic wisdom traditions against the Christian-dominated culture.<sup>113</sup> However the inclusion of Apollo and Dionysos is not only a rejection of Christianity: it may be viewed as part of a more poetical shaping of Platonism that anticipates later philosophical allegory. Proclus emulates Iamblichus by assigning a *skopos*, or main theme, to the text that relates to and unifies the text's arguments, a practice which allows for varied, yet ultimately interrelated, exegetical approaches.<sup>114</sup> He interprets the *skopos* of the *Timaeus* as *physiologia*, or nature.<sup>115</sup> From this perspective, the links that Proclus proposes between "number" and "theology" reveal the extent of his inquiry into the nature of the universe and all it contains, painstakingly drawing relationships between macrocosm

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<sup>111</sup> See Baltzly's footnote, p. 85.

<sup>112</sup> Baltzly, 'Introduction', p. 17.

<sup>113</sup> Helmig and Steel, 'Proclus', *SEP*.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

and microcosm, soul and body, the corporeal and incorporeal, divine and mortal—to serve an ultimately humanist end.

Harmony is thus not only the key to understanding the universe, but oneself. On the soul's triple nature as Being, Sameness, and Difference, Proclus writes that “the essence of the soul has harmonized plurality together with itself” (Pr. III.ii.126). He agrees with Plato's assertion in *Phaedo* 92a-95a that “the soul is a harmony” as well as not a harmony (III.ii.126.15). It is harmonic in the sense that it is a harmony of the body, but it is simultaneously separate, “existing in and of itself and reverting upon itself” (Pr. III.ii.126.20). This accords with his casting of the soul as a mixing of order and chaos, represented by Apollo and Dionysus, to unify all properties of existence. It is thus relevant for Proclus to consider these themes in relation to human nature: the soul is a “close paradigm of the harmony in the sensible realm” (III.ii.207). The *Commentary on the Timaeus* concludes with a characterisation of man as a microcosm reflecting the elements and causes of the entire universe (Pl. 92c).<sup>116</sup> His philosophical works ultimately reveal an interest in humanity, whose perfect and imperfect nature is nevertheless deeply connected with cosmic harmony.

Although the writers of medieval dream visions are unlikely to have been directly familiar with Proclus' works, his emphasis on the relationship between the human and the material to the divine and his symbolic and proto-allegorical exegesis of Platonism may be seen as precursors to Latin philosophical allegory and (Latin and vernacular) dream poetry. The shift in focus from macrocosm to microcosm evident in the development of the dream vision form from early philosophical allegories to the vernacular dream vision tradition epitomized by *RR* reflects an increased interest in the harmony of the universe from a human perspective. Furthermore, his emphasis on vision was highly influential to the mystical tradition, which will be addressed in the second half of this thesis in relation to the alliterative poem, *Pearl*.

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.



Both Calcidius and Proclus emphasised the importance of mathematical harmony in the structure of the universe and the soul. Proclus further presents a crucial distinction between materiality and immateriality in relation to harmony and thought. The next three theoreticians in this study, Augustine, Macrobius, Martianus Capella, and Boethius rebranded Neoplatonism and theories of music to suit their various ends. Augustine's treatment of music bridged antique Neoplatonism with Christian theology, the liberal arts, and philosophy, profoundly influencing the medieval inheritance of these applications of music. The other three theorists contributed to the medieval notion of music in more targeted, though nevertheless substantial, ways: Macrobius blended cosmology and dream theory with the literary dream vision; Martianus employed allegory to discuss music as one of the liberal arts; and Boethius sought to provide an account of music in its harmonic and audible forms. The three treatises share an emphasis on the relationship between the music of the macro- and microcosms, specifically the ways in which divine harmony relates to human beings. This is an important shift that bridged the gap between the lofty, abstract music of philosophical theory and developments in the performance of music in the church, and by the troubadours and the *trouvères*, with the various strands coinciding in the dream vision.

*Augustine on Rhythm, Time, Sensation, and Concord*

The following section outlines the examination of music theory in the Augustinian corpus, highlighting points of contact between early Neoplatonism and Christian theology. The significant texts are Augustine's *De musica (On Music)*, *Confessiones (Confessions)*, and *De civitate Dei contra paganos (The City of God against the Pagans)*. While the *De musica* is considered a minor text, particularly in comparison with the latter two seminal works, it crucially contextualises Augustine's later, briefer, commentary on *musica* and four related topics: rhythm, temporality, the inner and outer ear, and concord, or harmony. Augustine's *De musica* comprises six books on rhythm and is structured as an Aristotelian dialogue between a master and student. The first five were written around 387, before Augustine's baptism, and the sixth finished after 391, before writing the *Confessions* in 397-c. 400.<sup>117</sup> Six further books, on melody, were intended to be written, and these together would have been part of a collection of treatises on the liberal arts.<sup>118</sup> While Boethius' *De institutione musica (On Music)* was the preeminent musical treatise of the Middle Ages, works by Martianus Capella, Isidore of Seville, and the Augustinian text were also widely read in the Middle Ages.<sup>119</sup> While Augustine's treatise may be viewed as lacking the mathematical rigour of Boethius' *De musica*, its discussion of the *ars metria* (metrics and rhythm) in the first five books was influential in its own right.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, the transition between the fifth and sixth books, from music as a liberal art to the metaphysics of rhythm, sets Augustine's

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<sup>117</sup> Robert J. Forman, 'Augustine's Music: "Keys" to the *Logos*', in *Augustine on Music: An Interdisciplinary Collection of Essays*, ed. Richard R. La Croix (Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), 18-27 (p. 17).

<sup>118</sup> Robert Catesby Taliaferro, 'Introduction' to Augustine, *On Music, On Music*, in *Writings of Saint Augustine*, trans. Robert Taliaferro (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1947), II: *Saint Augustine: Immortality of the Soul and Other Works*, 153-66 (p. 153). English translations of Augustine's *De musica* are given from this edition (pp. 169-379), unless otherwise noted, and are cited by book, chapter, and section. The Latin text is taken from *De musica*, ed. Martin Jacobsson (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2017).

<sup>119</sup> Ubaldo Pizzani, 'The Fortune of the *De Institutione musica* from Boethius to Gerbet D'Aurillac: A Tentative Contribution', in *Boethius and the Liberal Arts: A Collection of Essays*, 97-156 (p. 98).

<sup>120</sup> Bower, 'Role of *De Institutione*', p. 159.

treatise apart from the others. The sixth book begins with a dismissal of the earlier books on rhythm and metre as “childishly” [“pueriliter”] delaying the weightier discussion to come, of the relationship of rhythm to the soul (VI.i.1, p. 324). Critics have tended to agree with this assessment, particularly noting the tedious (and sometimes error prone) enforcing of the given rhythmical principles to lines of Classical poetry.<sup>121</sup> If the master’s statement is meant to be ironic, as Taliaferro claims, it successfully redirects the reader’s attention away from lesser, ancient themes, and to a more relevant and substantial account of their theological import.<sup>122</sup>

Nevertheless, the first books also contain foundational views about musical rhythm and harmony. Near the beginning of the treatise, the master states, “[m]usic is the science of mensurating well” [“[m]usica est scientia bene modulandi”] (I.ii.2). This tenet reflects Augustine’s apparent intention of classifying rhythm as a purely musical discipline.<sup>123</sup> Although *poetria*, the art of metrics, had been considered a part of *musica* at least since Augustine’s time, this treatise makes a case for the scientific study of rhythm in number and verse, against the apparent threat of metrics being treated non-quantitatively by grammarians and rhetoricians (VI.i.1). When considered as rhythmic sciences, music and poetry create a bridge between the arts of the trivium and quadrivium, and this link was maintained in the Middle Ages with encyclopedists and commentators endorsing measure and rhythm, rather than sound, as the defining factor of music.<sup>124</sup>

The other significant point explained in the *De musica* that is illuminating in relation to musical ideas and motifs in medieval dream poetry is Augustine’s definition of harmony. The theological importance of harmony is suggested early in the first book. There is a strong Neoplatonic resonance in Augustine’s elevation of goodness and unity. In explaining the exact wording of the above definition

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<sup>121</sup> See Forman, pp. 17-18; Taliaferro, pp. 161-2.

<sup>122</sup> See Taliaferro, p. 154.

<sup>123</sup> Taliaferro, pp. 162-3.

<sup>124</sup> Margaret Bent, ‘Grammar and Rhetoric in Late Medieval Polyphony’, in *Rhetoric Beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Carruthers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 52-72 (p. 52).

of music, as “bene modulandi”, the master equates good mensuration with moving well [“bene mouendi”], as the result of keeping harmony across intervals (I.iii.4). These combined qualities distinguish the liberal art of music from singing more generally (ibid.). Augustine thus outlines the qualities that define true music—it is rational, harmonious, and thus worthy of the designation and scientific rigour of the liberal arts. Furthermore, harmony can create unity. This is outlined through laws observable in the movements of numbers (I.11), specifically through relationships between the numbers one to ten. In the next two books, the system is applied to poetic rhythm and metre. From these computations, it is concluded that numerical harmony, as between parts of a sequence and parts of a whole, creates “unity” [“unitas”](I.12.23).<sup>125</sup> The significance of *analogia* is then discussed: “the unity you love can be effected in ordered things by that alone whose name in Greek is *analogia* and which some of our [Latin] writers have called proportion” [“quod illa unitas, quam te amare dixisti, in rebus ordinatis hac una effici potest, cuius Gaecum nomen analogia est, nostri quidam proportionem uocauerunt”] (I.12.23).

Augustine’s approach to music in the first book blends Neoplatonism and apophatic theology, while ascribing a crucial role to the senses. Human beings necessarily depend on sense impressions to understand the “traces” [“uestigia”] of the highest form of music that issues forth from “the most secret sanctuaries” [“secretissimis penetralibus”] (I.13.28). The master explains that to follow these traces we should turn away from “bounds of time extending beyond the capacity of our senses” [“ultra capacitatem sensus nostri porrectas temporum metas”] and instead consider that which is accessible to reason: “the short interval lengths which delight as in singing and dancing” [“de his breuibus interuallorum spatiis, quae in cantando saltanoque nos mulcent”] (ibid.). This, as will become apparent, is contradicted by Boethius, who rejects all forms of sonorous music, and is somewhat compatible with Martianus’ allegorical portrayal of both kinds of music.

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<sup>125</sup> For details leading to this proof, see the analysis of the numbers one, two, and three in *De musica*, I.12.

There is a further significance relating to music and speech (discussed in relation to *HF* and *PF*). As Vance indicates, “Augustine elects language as the empirical foundation for his physics of movements and time [and] considered verbal signals—*voces*—to be corporeal things, even though what they signify is not corporeal but mental.”<sup>126</sup> In Book VI of *De musica*, Augustine explains how three rhythms pertaining to human experience—memory [“*memoria*”], perception [“*sentiendo*”], and sound [“*sono*”]—allow mankind to become more attuned with universal rhythms (VI.vi.16).<sup>127</sup> It is difficult for mortals to perceive and love the purest forms of beauty, such as the original harmony created by God (VI.vii.20), so the senses are attracted to the beauty of rhythmic movements in sensible bodies (VI.xiii.38, VI.xv.49). The soul, through its rhythms of reason and sensuality, is able to convert heard sounds into memorised rhythms (VI.xi.31), retained as movements of the mind in the memory (VI.xi.32). As such, it is through “temporal rhythms” [“*numeros temporales*”] present in daily activities such as walking or singing (VI.xv.49), that the soul can learn virtue and become ordered (VI.xvi.50). This “ordering” [“*ordinatio*”] is described as the virtue of “justice” [“*iustitiam*”] (*ibid.*). In this way, Augustine reveals the means of raising the mind from the matter of the first five books to the contemplation of the unchangeable rhythms. As thought moves “from the corporeal to the incorporeal” [“*ut a corporeis ad incorporea*”] (VI.ii.2), literary scholars may escape the error of studying texts “without any idea of what they enjoy in them” [“*in nugis conterunt nescientes, quid ibi delectet*”], and ascend with love towards God (VI.i.1).

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<sup>126</sup> Eugene Vance, ‘Saint Augustine: Language as Temporality’, in *Mimesis: From Mirror to Method, Augustine to Descartes*, ed. John D. Lyons and Stephen G. Nichols, Jr (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1982), 20-35 (pp. 21-22). See Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, ed. R.P.H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 2.i.1: Augustine defines a sign as that which causes one to think beyond the immediate sensory perception of something.

<sup>127</sup> The only recent critical edition of the *De musica* is Jacobsson’s facing page translation of Book IV: *Augustine, De musica liber VI: a critical edition with a translation and introduction*, Martin Jacobsson (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2002), p. 39. English translations of Book VI are taken from this edition, while I have retained the Latin of Jacobsson’s De Gruyter edition, which is more recent.

These themes appear elsewhere in Augustine's work, and are reinforced and extended most significantly in the *Confessiones*.<sup>128</sup> In *Confessiones* X and XI, Augustine elaborates upon voice and hearing, through the spiritual and bodily senses, in relation to devotion, memory, and time. There are many Neoplatonist echoes, particularly in the Porphyrian description of the proper use of the divine gift of sense (X.7(11)), and the kinship of the soul and music, derived from the *Timaeus* (X.33(49)).<sup>129</sup> The purpose of devotional song is to delight the ear, thus aiding worship, although one must strive to focus on the subject of devotion, rather than the sensual mode of delivery (*ibid.*). A tenet from the *De musica* is echoed in the description of memory as containing the laws of numbers (X.7(19), p. 190), and then extended: the activity of learning orders the mind for the proper storage of concepts in the memory (X.11(18)). Book XI also develops the *De musica*'s passages on duration. The word of God is equated with God himself: "[h]e is spoken eternally, and through him all things are uttered eternally" ["quod sempiternae dicitur et eo sempiternae dicuntur omnia"] (XI.7(9)). Human words are movements subject to time, but these make accessible the eternal word within all humans. Spoken words are relayed from the bodily ear to the inner ear and the judicious mind, which work together to compare temporal, sounding words to the silent, eternal word of God (XI.5(7)). Furthermore, time is measured in the human mind, and the perception of past and future is only the experience of present consciousness (XI.17(36)). Music, therefore, is a complex sequential phenomenon: when a person sings or listens to a hymn, the experience is temporal and bodily, with fluctuating perceptions elicited through the anticipation of future sounds and memory of past sounds (for once song is sung, it only

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<sup>128</sup> More minor references to sound and hearing occur in *De doctrina Christiana*, on the significance of signs, numerical and musical signs are described in Book II explains how all things are woven into the temporal order, how number can be used in contemplation of eternity, and how to live according to the example set by number. Book IV details the use of figurative language in eloquent preaching, the self-indulgent pleasures of the ear, singing, and listening.

<sup>129</sup> Passages from the *Confessiones* are taken from the parallel text edition, *Confessions*, ed. and trans. Carolyn J.-B. Hammond, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014-16). Chadwick links these passages to Plotinus 5.5.12.1-6 and the general alignment of the soul with harmony in the *Timaeus*. See footnotes to these lines in *Confessions*, ed. and trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

exists in the memory),<sup>130</sup> but God’s “eternity is immutable” [“accidit incommutabiliter aeterno”], and faith therefore elevates even the fallen (XI.31(41)).

The relationship of man to the eternal order is also discussed in the *De civitate Dei* and may be linked to the comparison of the spiritual and corporeal senses in *Confessiones* X. In the inner ear, “sound is heard that time does not carry away” [“sonat quod non rapit tempus”] (X.6(8)). In the *De civitate Dei*, Augustine states that it is possible, through the inner ear, to hear the music of the heavenly city even within the dissonance of the city of man (II.21, XIX.13).<sup>131</sup> In the second book, he quotes an extended passage from Cicero’s *De re publica* (2, 42, 69), in which Scipio draws an analogy between musical harmony [“harmonia”] and civic concord [“concordiam”]:

Ut in fidibus aut tibiis atque cantu ipso ac vocibus concertus est quidam tenendus ex distinctis sonus, quem inmutatum aut discrepantem aures eruditae ferre non possunt, isque concertus ex dissimillarum vocum moderatione concors tamen efficitur et congruens, sic ex summis et infimis et mediis interiectis ordinibus, ut sonis, moderata ratione civitatem consensus dissimillimorum concinere

As, when lyres or flutes accompany the voices of singers, a kind of harmony should be maintained out of separate sounds, and the trained ear cannot endure any false note or disagreement, and such harmony, concordant and exact, may be produced by the regulation even of voices most unlike, so by combining the highest, lowest and between them the middle class of society, as if they were tones of different pitch, provided they are regulated by due proportion, the state may produce a unison by agreement of elements quite unlike. (*De civitate Dei* II.13)

In Book XIX, Augustine expands upon this, explaining that different levels of order (specifically within the body, between the body and soul, between man and God, between men, within the human dwellings, and within the celestial city) in terms of different things or individuals coming together in harmony and unity (XIX.13). He adds that “[o]rder is the classification of things equal and unequal that assigns to each its proper position” [“[o]rdo est parium dispariumque rerum sua cuique loca triubuens dispositio”] (XIX.13). Those who do not live peacefully, with themselves or others, are the “wretched” [“miseri”] (ibid.). Regarding world harmony, Spitzer notes Augustine’s interpretation of

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<sup>130</sup> Also cf. XI.27(34) on how the voice sounds temporally.

<sup>131</sup> Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, 7 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957-72), I, trans. George E. McCracken (1957), Bk II, 21; VI, trans. William Chase Greene (1960), Bk XIX, 13. Discussed in Travis, pp. 203-4. Also see Leo Spitzer, *Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony: Prolegomena to an Interpretation of the Word Stimmung*, ed. Anna Granville Hatcher (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1963), p. 40.

such discord [although the term is not explicitly used here] revised the Stoic view. While Stoic thought considered harmony as “forcing together the inimical”, Augustine considered harmony’s ability to resolve apparent discord by allowing the believer’s “inner ear” to hear the harmony underlying multiplicity, so that “*concordia discors* foreshadows the differentiated harmony of the saints.”<sup>132</sup> Travis adds that Augustine, “powerfully impressed” by the Ciceronian resolution, attempts to improve it, and in doing so “silenc[es] the fractiousness of social dissent”.<sup>133</sup> Augustine does, however, make the case that discord is common, however it cannot exist independently of concord: on evil, he writes, “there is a nature in which there is no evil [...] but there cannot be a nature in which there is no good” [“est natura in qua nullum malum est [...] esse autem natura in qua nullum bonum sit, non potest”] (ibid.). Although, for Travis, Augustine may appear to gloss over the issue in this text, his other writings on music celebrate the ability to see music, sound, and voice—admittedly alluring to the bodily senses—for its traces of immutable, spiritual laws. In this respect, it may be possible to view discord as potential harmony, and as the sensible counterpart to divine consonance. Disorder is merely a defect of eternal and omnipresent order.

This brief survey of Augustinian musical theory bridges Neoplatonist thought to the Christian theology underlying the most fundamental concepts about music in the Middle Ages. In Augustine’s *De musica*, a substantial argument is made for a link between *poetria* and *musica*, and the treatment of the two as liberal arts disciplines. This relationship endured in medieval thought, as did the understanding of musical harmony, order, and measure. As shown, *Confessiones* X and XI extend these themes, specifically in relation to practical devotion, the spiritual and corporeal senses, and the difference between audible sound, which is temporal, and its ability to stimulate the divine *logos* as an eternal divine rhythm that naturally resides in mankind. Finally, Augustine’s application of the ideas

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<sup>132</sup> Spitzer, *World Harmony*, p. 40 (Discussed in Travis, p. 204).

<sup>133</sup> Travis, p. 203.



of concord and order to human life in *De civitate Dei*, via Cicero, posits a Christian solution to the problem of human discord, be it personal or interpersonal, through *concordia discors*. Discord cannot exist without concord, and is therefore indicative of the imperishable divine order in all things. These themes will be addressed in Chaucer's use of *musica* (including *vox* and rhythm), temporality, and *concordia discors* in *BD*, *HF*, *PF*, and James I of Scotland's *KQ*, in which a transcendent order succeeds over different degrees of personal and interpersonal dissonance.

Macrobius' fifth-century *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* (*Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*) was one of the most well-known Neoplatonic treatises and the most influential source of dream theory in the Middle Ages. It is based primarily on the last book of Cicero's *De re publica*, which contains the *Somnium Scipionis*, Book 6.8 of which is specifically a romanised adaptation of Plato's vision of Er.<sup>134</sup> At the beginning of his treatise, Macrobius states he has read both Cicero's and Plato's *Republic* (I.1). Macrobius' *Commentary* represents a crucial linking of cosmology and allegorical dream vision that would become an authoritative guide for dream discourse—both literary and philosophical—in the medieval west. In this treatise, Macrobius reiterates a set of basic cosmological concepts familiarised by earlier Neoplatonists—the spheres, the composition of the soul, numerology, ratio and harmony—and reveals their intrinsic relationship to the most elevated type of dream, the prophetic *visio* (*Commentary* I.iii.2; I.iii.9), which forges a connection between man and his divine origin. While his five-fold taxonomy of dreams was the dominant model throughout the Middle Ages, his exegesis of Cicero's *Somnium* and the importance he ascribes to allegory and symbolism in general helped inaugurate the literary tradition of the medieval dream vision. Since Macrobius' writing on dreams has been discussed in detail (see Introduction), the following section considers Macrobius' ideas about music.

Macrobius' life coincided with that of Proclus, and as noted above, the two shared a similar attitude toward numerology. Macrobius devoted an extended part of his theory to this subject in relation to the essence of numbers, “for in the progress of our thought from our own plane to that of the gods they present the first example of perfect abstraction” [“quod cogitationi a nobis ad superos

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<sup>134</sup> Schueller, pp. 96-7.

meanti occurrit prima perfectio incorporealis in numeris”] (I.v.4). Numbers are attributed a certain “bodily” nature and are hierarchical with respect to their capacity to exploit their corporeality:

inter ipsos tamen proprie pleni vocantur secundum hos modos, qui praesenti tractatui necessarii sunt, qui aut vim obtinent vinculorum aut corpora rursus efficiuntur aut corpus efficiunt, sed corpus quod intellegendo, non sentiendo concipias. (I.v.4)

[T]hose numbers particularly deserve to be called full or perfect (according to the interpretation that is essential to this treatise) which either bind bodies together, or become bodies again, or form a single body; but the word body is used here as you conceive it through intelligence and not sense-perception.

Numbers which are superior are those which, essentially, are useful for their capacities in terms of ratio. This passage corresponds to Plato’s mixing and dividing of portions and Proclus’ mythologised account of this process. Significantly, Macrobius explains that “bodies” [“corpora”] can be intellectual and mathematical, or physical and sensible:

[O]mnia corpora aut mathematica sunt alumna geometriae aut talia quae visum tactum ve patiantur. horum priora tribus incrementorum gradibus constant. aut enim linea eicitur ex puncto, aut ex linea superficies, aut ex planitie soliditas. altera vero corpora quattuor elementorum conlato tenore in robor substantiae corpulentae concordii concreione coalescunt. (I.vi.35)

[A]ll bodies are either mathematical, the creatures of geometry, or such as are perceptible to sight or touch. The former possess three stages of development: the line grows out of the point, the surface out of the line, and the solid out of the surface; the latter, because of the adhesive qualities of the four elements, harmoniously grow together into firm bodily substances.

Mathematical bodies progress from the simplest incorporeal piece, the point, to line, surface, and solid (Ibid). He does not specify the point at which incorporeal becomes corporeal: corporeality is instead described as a continuum. After number (which is “prior to surface and to lines” [“numeros autem hac superiores praecedens”] (I.v.13)) and form come corporeal bodies:

[E]rgo primus a corporibus ad incorporea transitus offendit corporum terminos, et haec est prima incorporea natura post corpora; sed non pure nec ad integrum carens corpore, nam licet extra corpus natura eius sit, tamen non nisi circa corpus apparet. (I.v.6)

Consequently the first transition from the corporeal to the incorporeal brings us to the termini of bodies; and these are the first incorporeality after corporeality, not pure nor entirely free from corporeality, for although they are naturally outside of bodies, they are not found except around bodies.

Like Proclus, Macrobius provides numerical and symbolic definitions for each level of existence. The monad refers to unity, which for Macrobius is the soul as well as the Supreme God (I.vi.7-8). The dyad is the first number to depart from the Supreme God of the monad, and represents the beginning

of perceptible bodies, in keeping with the Pythagorean numerology also used by Proclus (I.vi.18). The composition of the soul is numerologically linked to musical intervals: the number three represents the soul (reason, emotion, and appetite), which is derived from musical concords (I.vi.42-3). Macrobius has admitted the place of mathematics in harmony, but in Book II, which discusses the microcosmos, he veers toward an interpretation of harmony as audible, rather than purely abstract:

mundi anima, quae ad motum hoc quod videmus universitatis corpus impellit, contexta numeris musicam de se creantibus concinentiam necesse est ut sonos musicos de motu quem proprio impulsu praestat efficiat, quorum originem in fabrica suae contextionis invenit. (II.ii.19)

[T]he World-Soul, which stirred the body of the universe to the motion that we now witness, must have been interwoven with those numbers which produce musical harmony in order to make harmonious the sounds which it instilled by its quickening impulse. It discovered the source of these sounds in the fabric of its own composition.

It is in response to this conception of music that Macrobius describes the harmony of the spheres as “great and pleasing sound” [“complet aures [...] et tam dulcis sonus”] that fills Scipio’s ears (II.i.2). After alluding to Plato’s discussion of the celestial sirens (II.iii.1-4; cf. Proclus section above), Macrobius defines sound as physical (II.i.5), drawing upon Aristotle’s explanation of sound in *De anima* (II.viii.419b). (Aristotle’s theory is central to Chaucer’s *HF*, discussed in the next chapter.) Macrobius describes the music of the spheres in an acoustic rather than strictly mathematical way, and even discusses the psychological appeal of audible music, stating all souls are drawn to music, including refined and barbarous peoples, as well as animals, and that it has the power to heal and arouse emotions (II.iii.7-10). As he explains, “every disposition of the soul is controlled by song” [“omnis habitus animae cantibus gubernator”] (II.iii.9), and “the soul carries with it into the body a memory of the music which it knew in the sky” [“quia in corpus defert memoriam musicae cuius in caelo”] (II.iii.7).

The *Somnium* illustrates the audible celestial music to express, above all, the role of the individual in contributing to civic harmony, the topic which concludes the text (*Somnium* v-ix). Cicero’s discussion may be interpreted as a kind of human music predicated on individual fame and

statehood,<sup>135</sup> pagan values that are at odds with Christianity and Christian Neoplatonism. This topic is treated relatively briefly and recontextualized in the *Commentary* as an illustration of a specific kind of human virtue (I.viii). Cicero's description of the spheres and the commonwealth appears in Chaucer's excerpts from the *Commentary* in *BD* (29-84) and is indirectly echoed in *HF* when the dreamer wonders if he may be stelled (584), both of which are discussed in the next chapter.<sup>136</sup> Chaucer uses this discrepancy to highlight difficult inconsistencies between individual duty and impulses on the one hand, and the Christian afterlife on the other. In light of Chaucer's allusions, Macrobius' *Commentary*, we can see, was viewed as a central influence on the conception of real and literary dreams. It emphasised the human relevance of the connection between micro- and macrocosm more than earlier Neoplatonic thought, especially in terms of the possibility for cosmic harmony to be made audible to human ears in dreams, but was also significant for raising problems given the distance between God and humankind entailed by such a model. Dreams are presented as an intermediary between two realms, further diluting their differences, and thus providing ample opportunity for dream poets to explore the relationship between the two. At the same time, there remain true and false dreams in this model, and even divinely sent dreams can only be as illuminating as a dream interpreter's mortal reason can allow. In dreams, as in audible harmonies, the intimation of a higher reality that inspires awareness of higher things may be accompanied by new awareness of one's limitations in ordinary life.

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<sup>135</sup> See Schueller, pp. 97-8.

<sup>136</sup> See also *HF* 929-931.

*Martianus Capella's Allegory of Harmony*

Roughly contemporary to Macrobius' *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* is Martianus Capella's (c. 400-440) *Treatise on the Seven Liberal Arts*, which, along with the works of Cassiodorus and later Isidore of Seville, were "favourite textbooks" of the early Middle Ages modelled on the Latin encyclopaedic tradition.<sup>137</sup> Martianus' treatise includes the influential *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* (*Marriage of Philology and Mercury*), an allegory in which the details of the liberal arts are expounded by their representative demigods. Bower describes Martianus' work as "cursory and encyclopaedic" in approach, lacking the quantitative precision of Boethius' *De musica*, the former opting for a Roman rhetorical approach to the liberal arts.<sup>138</sup> Martianus eschews a strictly theoretical exposition of the arts for the poetic mode of philosophical allegory, nevertheless according with Neoplatonic exaltations of harmony by personifying and portraying Harmony ["*Harmonia*"] as a goddess, preeminent among the gods of the liberal arts.<sup>139</sup> Martianus' (and later Alan of Lille's) choice of the allegorical mode, in conjunction with Macrobius' defense of the veiled truths contained in dream symbols, may be seen as directly influencing Guillaume de Lorris' use of allegory in *RR* and the dream vision tradition inspired by it. Also significant is his inclusion of Harmony's lament for mankind's abuse of her gift, an appeal voiced by Nature and applied to non-procreative sex in Alan of Lille's dream vision, *DPN*.

Martianus gives Harmony a prominent role in the *Marriage*. She is the last god to appear in the ceremony, her entrance accompanied by audible instrumental music suggestive of perfection in its masterful performance (905). As her "stirring symphony, impossible to describe" ["*egersimon*

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<sup>137</sup> Haren, p. 69.

<sup>138</sup> Calvin M. Bower, 'The Role of Boethius' *De institutione musica* in the Speculative Tradition of Western Musical Thought', in *Boethius and the Liberal Arts: A Collection of Essays*, ed. Michael Masi (Berne: Peter Lang, 1981), 157-174 (p. 160).

<sup>139</sup> All references to Martianus Capella are to Book IX, 'Harmony', in Martianus Capella, *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, *LLT-A* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010) [accessed 27 February 2019]; translations from *Martianus Capella and the Seven Liberal Arts, Volume II: The Marriage of Philology and Mercury*, trans. William Harris Stahl and Richard Johnson with E. L. Burge (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).

ineffabile”] concludes, she addresses Jove by “lending her voice to a new melody and meter” to the form of a “hymn” [“aliis modulis numeris que voce etiam associata sic coepit”] (911). The dramatic effect of Harmony’s song is profound: “Immediately a sweet new sound burst forth, like the strains of auloi; and echoing melodies, surpassing the delight of all sounds, filled the ears of the enchanted gods” [“ac melodiae ultra cuncta rerum oblectamina recinentes auditum mirantium complevere divum”] (905). Harmony is distinguished from the other deities as they stand in admiration of her, lightly envious of the musical mastery that they cannot themselves achieve (921). Martianus’ placement of her as the last liberal art to enter also draws attention to her preeminence as the executor of God’s law of order, and the theme is evoked in the *ekphrasis* of her shield, which is covered in circles representing the modes in concord—divine harmony emphasised by the absence of instruments—and emits sounds that “surpassed those of all musical instruments” [“omnium melodias transcenderat organorum”] (909-10). Inscribed with the planetary spheres, it emits “a concord of all the modes” [“omnium modorum concinentiam”] (909) against which all other music appears dissonant before it is reverently silenced (910).

Human music, represented by the golden miniature instruments in Harmony’s right hand, is symbolically and visually separate but parallels the shield of cosmic harmony (909). Predating Alan of Lille’s *DPN*, Martianus establishes the importance of mankind within the universe and highlights his neglect of a gift intended to elevate his stature among mortal beings in the form of a divine complaint. Furthermore, the centrality of divine harmony is apparent in its emphasis in the beginning and ending of the *Marriage*, from the opening hymn calling upon the “sacred principle of unity amongst the gods” [“copula sacra deum”] that graces weddings with its song and was birthed by a Muse (I.1), to Harmony’s lullaby as Mercury and Philology enter the marriage chamber (IX.996). Stahl and Burge note that the concept of the universe as a harmonisation through the mutual attraction of “varying elements or seeds” is in Plato (Pl. 32c) and especially in Neoplatonic cosmology (e.g. Macrobius,

*Commentary*, II.2.18).<sup>140</sup> Harmony's account of creation blends the divine myth told in the *Timaeus* with philosophical commentary while identifying the Pythagoreans as first discovering the link between soul and body, thus assigning a unique significance to the presence of humanity within the universal scheme:

[S]ed cum illa monas intellectualis que lucis prima formatio animas fontibus emanantes in terrarum habitacula rigaret, moderatrix earum iussa sum demeare. denique numeros cogitabilium motionum totius que voluntatis impulsus ipsa rerum dispensans congruentiam temperabam. quam rem didere mortalibus universis Theophrastus laboravit [...] (922-3)

[W]hen the Monad and first hypostasis of intellectual light was conveying to earthly habitations souls that emanated from their original source, I was ordered to descend with them to be their governess. It was I who designated the numerical ratios of perceptible motions and the impulses of perfect will, introducing restraint and harmony into all things, a subject which Theophrastus elaborated upon as a universal law for all mankind.

Harmony's complaint about man indicates a further relationship between music and humanity. She recounts how she left the sublunary sphere, forsaking mortals (899). Her departure, as she describes, was justified "in censuring ungrateful mankind for their apathetic attitude" ["sed ingratae humanitatis ignaviam viderer iure damnasse"] (929) but that now she has returned from her distant sphere, "[i]t will be both a pleasure and a profit to listen to this maiden, rediscovered after so many generations and restored to the melic arts" ["hanc igitur repertam post saecula numerosa et tandem in usum melicum carmen que renovatam tam volupe est quam conducit audire"] (900). Assuming the role of governess to mankind, she imparts her knowledge in an intelligible manner for the benefit of mortals (922). Here, Martianus emphasises the bond between divine and mortal beings. As Minerva explains, the liberal arts are a testimony to this intimate relationship, "for, in the cleavage that exists between the divine and mortal realms, they alone [i.e., the arts] have always maintained communication between the two [realms]" ["nam inter divina humana que discidia solae semper interiunxere colloquia. / has igitur ingressas agnoscetis probabitur que, divi"] (893). The arts are to maintain the communion between mankind and the divine.

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<sup>140</sup> See Stahl and Burge's footnote on p. 3 of the *Marriage*.



Martianus also defines music in terms of its relationship to the other liberal arts. Martianus defines audible harmony in a way that is distinct from the Neoplatonist tradition:

Priusquam me Lasus, ex urbe Hermionea vir, mortalibus divulgaret, tria tantum mei genera putabantur: ὕλικόν, ἀπεργαστικόν, ἐξαγγελτικόν, quod etiam ἐρμηνευτικόν dicitur. et ὕλικόν est, quod ex perseverantibus et similibus consonabat, id est sono, numeris atque verbis. sed quae ex his ad melos pertinent, harmonica, quae ad numeros, rhythmica, quae ad verba, metrica dicuntur. (936)

When Lasus, a man from the city of Hermione, first taught the principles of harmony to mortal men, only three aspects were recognized: *hylikon* [subject matter], *apergastikon* [practice], and *exangelikon* [exposition], also called *hermeneutikon*. *Hylikon* refers to things that sound together in a continuous and similar manner—melody, measures, words: those that pertain to melody are called harmonics; those that pertain to measures, rhythmic; and those that pertain to words, metrics.

Lasus (fl. sixth century BC) was a noted dithyrambist, teacher, and considered in a tenth-century source to have written the first music treatise.<sup>141</sup> Poetry and music are thus understood as analogous, primarily in their use of rhythmic and metrical ordering. The genera of rhythm are the same for music and verse (977). As mentioned above, the classification of *poetria* as a type of *musica* may predate Augustine, and remained standard in the Middle Ages.<sup>142</sup> Deschamps' inclusion of poetry as a branch of music indicates the survival of this classification; John of Garland (c. 1195-c. 1272) also considered rhythmic poetry as music in his thirteenth-century treatise, the *Parisiana poetria*.<sup>143</sup> Poetry was also more commonly designated as a type of rhetoric from the fourteenth century.<sup>144</sup> Furthermore, Martianus linked music to other disciplines, including mathematics: “sonus quippe tanti apud nos loci est, quanti in geometricis signum, in arithmetice singulum” [“The tone has the same significance for us that the point has for geometers and the unit for arithmeticians”] (939).

There are many crossovers between music and the arts that involve senses other than hearing, for rhythm can be visual, auditory or tactile (968). An example of the visual is bodily movement; of

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<sup>141</sup> See Henry S. Macran, ed. and trans., *The Harmonics of Aristoxenus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902), p. 226; Isobel Henderson, ‘Ancient Greek Music’, in *The New Oxford History of Music*, 7 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), I: *Ancient and Oriental Music*, ed. Egon Wellesz (1957-1973), 336-403 (p. 382).

<sup>142</sup> Bent, ‘Grammar and Rhetoric’, p. 52. A discussion of Deschamps’ theories of music and poetry follows.

<sup>143</sup> James I. Wimsatt, *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries: Natural Music in the Fourteenth Century* (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 1991), p. 13; See John of Garland, *The Parisiana Poetria*, ed. Traugott Lawler (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 6.

<sup>144</sup> See Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries*, p. 13.

auditory, an appraisal of a vocal performance; of tactual, when a doctor looks for symptoms by feeling the pulse (968). There are other divisions of rhythm in relation to the different bodily senses:

sed quia visus auditus que numero dictus accedere, hi quoque in tria itidem genera dividuntur: in corporis motum, in sonorum modulandi que rationem atque in verba, quae apta modis ratio colligant; quae cuncta sociata perfectam faciunt cantilenam. (969)

Now since, as I have said, rhythm involves the visual and auditory senses, these too may be divided into three types: into motion of the body; into proper regulation of sounds and melody; and into words, which are grouped by suitable proportions into measures and which, when combined, produce a perfect song.

Rhythm is also apparent in the division of speech “into syllables” [“per syllabas”] (969).

Music is presented as far more than mathematics, however: it is conceived of in spatial terms (“A tone is a magnitude of space” [“tonus est spatii magnitudo”] (960)) and also for the combined effect of a musical piece as the result of its constituent elements. Compositional style creates a further overlap between music and poetry: *Melopoeia* is the effect of completed musical motion (965), while *rhythmopoeia* is “the manner of composing rhythms and working out all the figures to full perfection” [“est condicio numeri componendi et omnium figurarum plena perceptio”] and is divided into the same parts as *melopoeia* (994). There are other details that depart from a mathematical idea of music: rhythm is described as masculine because it produces form, while melody is feminine in its lack of a particular form (995).

The works of Martianus and Macrobius are fundamental to the establishment of the dream vision genre, not only structurally but thematically, through the use of allegory and symbolism. In addition, these theorists’ inheritance of Neoplatonist ideas of harmony and development of the significance of music for humankind, as well as the relationship of music to other intellectual disciplines, informs the portrayal of the transcendence and edifying appeal of music by medieval dream vision poets. The next theorist who must be considered as a major contributor to the medieval understanding of music is Boethius. His fifth-century treatise, *De institutione musica*, returns to the philosophical style of Plato and Aristotle, as opposed to the narrative exposition of Macrobius and the allegorisation of Martianus. Boethius’ classification of musical types, as the following section and

analysis show, is especially useful for considering the complex symbolism underlying the themes and motifs relating to music and harmony in medieval dream visions.

## Boethian Music Theory

Boethius (c. 480-524/5) was one of the most celebrated Neoplatonist thinkers of the Middle Ages, primarily for his final work, *De consolatio philosophiae* (*The Consolation of Philosophy*), which blends dream vision and philosophical discourse. He was familiar with the works of Cicero as well as Macrobius' *Commentary*.<sup>145</sup> *De institutione musica* (*On Music*) was the preeminent musical treatise of the Middle Ages alongside works by Martianus Capella, Isidore of Seville, and the *De musica* of Augustine.<sup>146</sup> Pizzani writes that the *De musica* occupied a privileged position among musical treatises because of the Boethian corpus' amplitude and prestige: "[t]his is true especially in the Carolingian and post-Carolingian periods, whence derive most of the codices bearing the treatises in question."<sup>147</sup> Prior to the Carolingian Renaissance, "all that remained of the music treatise of Boethius was a single copy in an unidentifiable library of the West."<sup>148</sup> As mentioned, Augustine's treatise on music may be viewed as lacking Boethius' mathematical systematisation, it was better known for its discussion of the *ars metria*.<sup>149</sup> Martianus Capella's account, by contrast, was not quantitative or systematised.<sup>150</sup> Censorinus' and Macrobius' writings on music, also read in the Middle Ages, were similarly lacking in thoroughness,<sup>151</sup> while Isidore's writings focused on biblical exegesis, having little to do with quantitative analysis.<sup>152</sup> The *De musica* of Boethius thus represents the first elaborate treatment of antique music theory in the medieval period, drawing upon the works of numerous antique music theorists, particularly Pythagoras and Aristotle, building them into an essentially Neoplatonic cosmos.

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<sup>145</sup> Magee, 'Boethius', p. 219.

<sup>146</sup> Ubaldo Pizzani, 'The Fortune of the *De Institutione Musica* from Boethius to Gerbet D'Aurillac: A Tentative Contribution', in *Boethius and the Liberal Arts: A Collection of Essays*, 97-156 (p. 98).

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Pizzani, p. 119.

<sup>149</sup> Bower, 'Role of *De Institutione*', p. 159.

<sup>150</sup> Bower, 'Role of *De Institutione*', p. 160.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Bower, 'Role of *De Institutione*', p. 163.

The result of Boethius' influence was, according to Bower, an "interaction between a strong musical tradition and a quantitative approach to truth."<sup>153</sup> Boethius is commonly accredited with the introduction of the terms *quadrivium* and *trivium* to the medieval scholastic tradition, but his interest in truth goes beyond the resurgence of the liberal arts.<sup>154</sup> Boethius' two surviving works on the quadrivial arts, *De arithmetica* and *De musica*, are grounded in the *Timaeus*' account of the rational construction of the universe, making these scientific treatises essentially extensions of Plato's fundamental reasoning.<sup>155</sup> On this basis, the understanding of ratio precedes knowledge about sounds and their unchanging essence.<sup>156</sup> But, as Bower argues, Boethius viewed the mathematical and mythic presentations of music as having equal importance: the mythic element "affects the character of both musical expositions and mathematical demonstration" and is most evident in Boethius' inclusion of Nichomachus of Gerasa's story of Pythagoras' discovery of musical consonance.<sup>157</sup>

Boethius began his treatise by defending the study of music. It should be learned, not only because it is a divine gift (as Martianus shows) or indicates the structure of the megacosmos (like Macrobius), but is innate to human and divine nature, and inseparable from both:

[P]erspiciue nec dubitanter appareat, ita nobis musicam naturaliter esse coniunctam, ut ea ne si velimus quidem carere possimus. Quocirca intendenda vis mentis est, ut id, quod natura est insitum, scientia quoque possit comprehensum teneri. (I.1)

[I]t appears beyond doubt that music is so naturally united with us that we cannot be free from it even if we so desired. For this reason the power of the intellect ought to be summoned, so that this art, innate through nature, may also be mastered, comprehended through knowledge.<sup>158</sup>

That music may only be properly understood in terms of ratio is a common axiom of medieval music philosophy. However, Boethius' phrasing in this passage betrays a subtle element of anxiety about the

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<sup>153</sup> Bower, 'Role of *De Institutione*', p. 171.

<sup>154</sup> Pizzani, p. 99.

<sup>155</sup> Magee, 'Boethius', p. 218.

<sup>156</sup> Calvin M. Bower, 'Introduction' to Boethius, *The Fundamentals of Music*, trans. C.M. Bower, ed. C.V. Palisca (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), xix-xliv (p. xxi).

<sup>157</sup> Bower, 'Introduction' to *Fundamentals*, p. xxi.

<sup>158</sup> All references to the Latin text are from Anicii Manlii Torquati Severini Boetii, *De institutione arithmetica libri duo; De institutione musica libri quinque. Accedit geometria quae fertur Boetii e libris manuscriptis*, ed. Gottfried Friedlein (Frankfurt: Minerva, 1966); translations are from Boethius, *The Fundamentals of Music*, trans. C.M. Bower, ed. C.V. Palisca (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).

imposing power of music: music must be tamed and assimilated into a rational discourse. Boethius then introduces three categories of music: *musica mundana*, *humana*, and *instrumentalis*:

Et prima quidem mundana est, secunda vero humana, tertia, quae in quibusdam constituta est instrumentis, ut in cithara vel tibiis ceterisque, quae cantilenae famulantur. (I.2)

The first is cosmic, whereas the second is human; the third is that which rests in certain instruments, such as the kithara or the aulos or other instruments which serve melody.

He maintains a hierarchy of music with the cosmic or divine at the top, but qualifies the status of the other two types by assigning them names. His increased interest in the latter two categories—music within the mortal sphere—is Aristotelian in outlook.<sup>159</sup> Perhaps, then, Boethius' call for a more comprehensive understanding of music was to provide resistance against music's appeal to the emotions and the baser qualities of man. This is consistent with Plato's warning against the immorality and sensuousness encouraged by certain musical modes in the *Republic* (398c-400c). If human music is to be elevated to the status of a liberal art, its effect on the bodily senses must be harnessed; it is distanced from its cosmic counterpart and therefore liable to misuse.

Boethius' portrayal of the human realm in relation to music reveals a balance between science and myth. His definition of the second category of music, *musica humana*, explains universal harmony as part of human nature: “[w]hoever penetrates into his own self perceives human music” [“Humanam vero musicam quisquis in sese ipsum descendit intellegit”] (I.2), for it unites the body and soul, rational and irrational parts, in harmony and consonance (I.2).<sup>160</sup> The musical relationship between the human and divine is further elaborated in Boethius' use of myth, specifically his use of Nichomachus of Gerasa's story of Pythagoras. Nichomachus' *Enchiridion* and his lost *Eisagoge musica*, along with Ptolemy's *Harmonica*, are believed to be among the sources of Boethius' treatise.<sup>161</sup> Nichomachus' story is recounted in *De musica* (I.10-11). A short comparison between the two versions highlights Boethius'

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<sup>159</sup> On “ethos” as “virtuous behaviour”, see Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. B. Jowett, in *Works*, II, 1986-2129, 1339a11.

<sup>160</sup> See Bower, *Fundamentals*, p. 10, note 41, on the allusion to Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1.13.1102-03. (*Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W. D. Ross, revised by J. O. Urmson, in *Works*, II, 1729-1867).

<sup>161</sup> See Bower, ‘Introduction’, to *Fundamentals*, pp. xxvi-xxix.

shift toward a more explicitly sober and rational philosophy of music. In the analogue, Nichomachus relates how Pythagoras is led by divine providence to identify musical consonances in the sound of hammers emanating from a blacksmith's workshop, after which he reproduces the sounds at home on a cordotone (an instrument possessing four strings held together by a nail and attached to varying weights) and names the consonances according to their numerical intervals.<sup>162</sup> Nichomachus' account of the "semidivine origin of harmonic knowledge, replete with hints of deeper meaning" is, as Godwin indicates, significant in linking the *musica mundana* to the natural world.<sup>163</sup> It endorses the discovery of divine music by instrumental means as well as man's unique capacity among living creatures to comprehend the mathematics of music—a kind of bridging of audible instrumental music and the innate *musica humana* that affirms the existence of the higher divine category.

In Boethius' text, Pythagoras' distrust of the human senses and his rational skill are emphasised more than a belief in providence. Boethius writes that he "abandoned the judgment of hearing" and "put no credence in human ears, which are subject to change [...] [n]or did he devote himself to instruments, in conjunction with which much inconstancy and uncertainty often arise" (I.10). Pythagoras then returns home and attaches weights to strings and discerns "by ear their consonances", and after various measurements, "in this way found the [musical] rule", prefiguring the function of the monochord as a standard tool for musical judgment (I.11).<sup>164</sup> Boethius thus imbues the myth with an added rationality that also characterises his broader discourse on music. However, the apparent bias toward cosmic music in Plato and his successors (such as Boethius) should not be taken as their simple rejection of sublunary music. The universal structure and ethics were viewed as having certain affinities. As Haren writes, "An understanding of the physical universe had implications for man's concept of his own role within it and a close association between the two studies long continued as a

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<sup>162</sup> Nicomachus of Gerasa, *Enchiridion harmonices*, trans. Godwin, in *Harmony of the Spheres*, 9-15, V.28; V.32.

<sup>163</sup> Godwin, p. 10.

<sup>164</sup> On the monochord, see Bower's note, *Fundamentals*, p. 19.

feature of classical thought, notably in the Stoic and Epicurean systems and in Neoplatonism.”<sup>165</sup>

Haren argues that Socrates would continue the association between speculative philosophy and ethics “derived from his identification of virtue with knowledge of the Good, knowledge being understood in this context as a conviction rather than simple recognition of fact.”<sup>166</sup>

Boethius’ *Consolation* is also a musical text in various ways. As the following chapters on Chaucer’s allusions to the *Consolation*’s theme of love as the root of divine harmony show, Boethian discourse helped shape medieval attitudes toward music being a multifaceted force that affects all modes of existence and experience. In *De musica*, Boethius affirms the virtue of a rational understanding of music while elevating audible and human music as descendants of the abstract universal harmony. It is through song that Lady Philosophy engages, persuades, and ultimately enlightens the imprisoned Boethius of the *Consolation* of the harmonious love that binds the universe and rules over Fortune (II.i). As evidenced by Martianus Capella’s allegory of Harmony, the bond between harmony and love also appears in other texts influential to the vernacular dream vision tradition. An extended analysis of the role of music in Bernardus’ *Cosmographia* has not been included since it expresses conventional Neoplatonist views of harmony. (Bernardus’ use of light symbolism is noteworthy, however, and a discussion thereof follows in the chapter on visual ideas.) The fundamental idea linking harmony and love to the unity of body and spirit is conveyed in the following passage:

Quae membris animam numeri proportio iungat,  
ut res dissimiles uniat unus amor;  
cum terrena caro, cum sit mens ignea, cumque  
haec gravis, illa movens, haec hebes, illa sagax;  
simplicitas animae sic transit in alteritatem  
divisumque genus dividit illud idem.

You understand what harmonious proportion unites souls to bodily members, so that a single bond of love unites unlike things; though the flesh be earthly and the mind fiery spirit, though one is heavy and inert, the other in

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<sup>165</sup> Haren, p. 9.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.



motion, one dull, the other keen; thus the simplicity of the soul enters the condition of otherness, and a divided mode of being divides what is one and the same. (*Microcosmus* 8.27-32)<sup>167</sup>

Bernardus' thorough knowledge of Neoplatonist literature is evident in this synthesis of ideas. He also wrote commentaries on the works of Martianus and Boethius. Chaucer, of course, translated the *Consolation*, and as this thesis will argue, was also influenced by the attitudes toward music and vision expressed in early dream visions and philosophical allegories of Martianus, Bernardus, and Alan of Lille. Chaucer's dream visions engage significantly with similar themes and relationships, while also being influenced by the developments in musical practice and French lyric narrative discussed in the next section.

Finally, regarding the philosophical treatment of the dual natures of music and love – as sensual, sensible, and of the mortal domain in one form, abstract, inaudible, perfect, and incorporeal in another – the most direct acknowledgment of these ideas is found in *Troilus and Criseyde* (*Tr.*).<sup>168</sup> Troilus' emotional state is expressed in the several songs he sings throughout the text. These convey the association between instrumental music and emotion, particularly joy and erotic desire, which had been deployed extensively by earlier French lyric poets, the troubadours, and *trouvères*. Troilus' penultimate song is of the “Love, that of erthe and se hath governaunce” (III.1744) that joins people in “holsom alliaunce” (III.1745), how couples who dwell “in vertu [...] / Bynd this accord” (III.1749-50), and the “concordynge” of seasons and elements “so discordable” into “a bond perpetuely durynge” (III.1752-4):

So wolde God, that auctour is of kynde,  
That with his bond Love of his vertu liste  
To cerclen hertes alle and faste bynde,  
That from his bond no wight the wey out wiste (III.1765-8)

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<sup>167</sup> Citations refer to either the *Megacosmus* or *Microcosmus* half of the text, book, and paragraph or line, depending on whether the book is in prose or verse.

<sup>168</sup> *Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. Stephen A. Barney, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 471-585. All references to Chaucer's works, unless otherwise noted, are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), hereafter abbreviated to *Riverside*.

The song expresses Troilus' final hope that Love's virtue warm cold hearts and keep sore hearts true (III.1768-71). Although he dies knowing Criseyde has not remained true to him, after Troilus' death his soul is elevated "ful blisfully" to the "holughnesse of the eighth sere" (V.1808-9) and symbolically, to a superior understanding of the love that binds all:

And ther he saugh with ful avyusement  
The erratik sterres, herkenyng armonye  
With sownes ful of heveyssh melodie. (V.1811-13)

From this literal and existential vantage point, he sees the "litel spot of erthe" (V.1815) and its "vanite / To respect of the pleyn felicite / That is in hevne above" (1817-19). The apotheosis is reminiscent of Scipio's and Geoffrey's visits to the eighth sphere in the *Somnium* and *HF* respectively; however, Troilus, unlike these two dreamers, has fully departed his body and taken on the ability, to use St Paul's phrase in II Corinthians 13:12, to see "face to face". Troilus' spirit laughs at mortal woe (V.1821). It is a laugh unburdened from the fetters of mortal life—and, perhaps, since he is a "lighte goost" (V.1808), the laugh symbolises his integration with the supreme love and harmony he has now attained. This is the joy Philosophy encourages Boethius to anticipate — "This is the love of which all things partake / The end of good their chosen goal and close" ["Hic est cunctis communis amor / repetunt que boni fine teneri"] (*Consol.* IV, met. vi) — and the injunction concluding her final song:<sup>169</sup>

Haec, nisi terrenus male desipis, ammonet figura:  
Qui recto caelum uultu petis exseris que frontem,  
in sublime feras animum quoque, ne grauata pessum  
inferior sidat mens corpore celsius leuato.

This picture warns – except to witless earthbound men –  
"You who raise your eyes to heaven with thrusting face,  
Raise up as well your thought, lest weighted down to earth  
Your mind sink lower as your body rises high." (*Consol.* V, met. v)

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<sup>169</sup> Boethius, *Philosophiae consolatio*, *LLT-A* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), based on the *Corpus Christianorum*, Series Latina 94 (Ludwig Bieler, 1958); translations from Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. Victor Watts (London: Penguin, 1999); also see *Boece* [Bo.], ed. Ralph Hanna III and Traugott Lawler, *Riverside*, 395-469.

Neoplatonist theories of music were deeply influential for medieval dream poetry, particularly as a result of the increased emphasis on the significance of music to humanity in philosophical allegories and Boethius' *De musica*. The twelfth-century scholastic allegories of Bernardus Silvestris and Alan of Lille referred to music in a more cursory manner and tended to include it as part of a more general concern with the cosmic law of harmony as love—and for Alan of Lille in *DPN* particularly, man's violation of natural love. The philosophical tradition, however, only accounted for one side of the idea of music as the writers of dream visions would view it. In order to complete the picture, we must consider the appeal of the *Roman de la rose* as an allegorical love vision both philosophical and courtly, and the wide impact of French developments in musical practice and poetic theory. Especially pertinent to this, and our next subject, was the practice of merging narrative and melody popular among poet-musicians such as Guillaume de Machaut, Jean Froissart, and Charles D'Orléans, whose work is extensively borrowed by Chaucer in his dream visions.

The medieval dream vision was considered as much a product of an extensive musical tradition as a literary one. The earliest surviving record of vernacular song in writing occurs as part of early thirteenth-century romance typified by such figures as Jean Renart and Gautier de Coinci.<sup>170</sup> Of the many extant medieval manuscripts that lay claim to the common association of music and narrative, including French song books (*chansonnières*), romances, sermons, treatises, translations, and the defined popular musical types known as *formes fixes*, the greatest number and most substantial of these texts are romances and first-person love narratives, accounting for “upwards of seventy works between the thirteenth and early fifteenth centuries”.<sup>171</sup> As Boulton writes,

The practice of quoting songs or song fragments in narrative texts arose first in northern France in the early thirteenth century, and remained popular there for another two hundred years. For reasons that are yet obscure the device in question—which eventually came to involve lyrics that were not meant to be sung at all—remained primarily a French phenomenon. While it occurs in more than seventy works in French, examples from other literatures of the period are rare.<sup>172</sup>

This technique of course also appears in Middle English dream poetry. Chaucer’s dream poetry, written some thirty years after Machaut’s, contains excerpts of song and an explicitly named roundel near the end of *PF*. I will adopt Boulton’s phrase, “lyric insertion”, which she defines as “songs or lyric poems of any origin [...] quoted either fully or in part in a larger literary (usually narrative) context” and are “exceedingly diverse in form and origin and represent virtually all the principal lyric genres of the period—*rondeau*, *chanson courtoise*, *ballade*, *virelai*, *complainte*, *lai*, *motet*.”<sup>173</sup> This section highlights some of the major French developments that contributed to the portrayal and use of musical tropes and themes in Middle English dream poetry. There are various implications of the changing

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<sup>170</sup> Ardis Butterfield, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France: from Jean Renart to Guillaume de Machaut* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 1.

<sup>171</sup> Butterfield, *Poetry and Music*, p. 4.

<sup>172</sup> Maureen Barry McCann Boulton, *The Song in the Story: Lyric Insertions in French Narrative Fiction, 1200-1400* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), p. 1.

<sup>173</sup> Boulton, p. 2.

status of the two arts, both alone and combined, to consider. Boulton's characterisation of texts containing lyric insertion as "hybrid creation[s] [...] combining two disparate forms", which calls into question the relationships between music and text, lyric and narrative forms, therefore "illustrat[ing] most vividly the intertextual character of medieval literature."<sup>174</sup>

The evolution of the relationship between song and poetry in thirteenth-century France resulted in new attitudes toward the respective uses of each art. One of the greatest factors affecting attitudes towards music and poetry in the Middle Ages was a gradual dislocation of lyric from musical notation in the thirteenth century. As Wimsatt observes, many of Machaut's lyrics lack musical accompaniment and are instead "ruled by the concept of music as number", or the rhythm and metre of the *formes fixes*.<sup>175</sup> Machaut, a leading composer and poet of his age, heralded this change, setting the precedent for the new lyric narrative form which would inspire successive generations of poets working in the courtly love and dream vision traditions. The separation of notation and lyric meant that poets who were not musicians (a major example being Froissart) were able to include musical matter in their works, thereby taking advantage of song's claims to emotional directness as well as certain rhetorical and narrative techniques. The inclusion of previously designated oral lyric material in a narrative setting became for Machaut and his successors an opportunity to reconsider the nature and function of the arts, as well as the potential didactic and expressive value of the new hybrid mode.

One of the ways musical material became accessible to non-musicians was through the establishment of clearly defined musical forms. The French *artes poeticae* of the Second Rhetoric (1370-1539) offered prescriptive information for each of the popular musical types, or *formes fixes*. The most successful of these, *L'art de dictier* (c. 1392), was written by Eustache Deschamps, a student of Machaut. But long before, in the ninth century, in response to Boethius' *De musica*, European interest in two

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<sup>174</sup> Boulton, p. 1

<sup>175</sup> Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries*, pp. 14-15.

forms of music had developed: *musica speculativa*, pertaining to mathematics and philosophy; and *musica theoria*, which related to musical practice as well as “the laws governing its execution”.<sup>176</sup> In the following centuries, a series of advancements relating to theory, composition, notation, and performance would arise. In France, a distinction is developed between “natural” and “artificial” music, again embracing the relationship between sound and word. Simultaneously, distinctions in musical notation and polyphonic expression arose in the French Cathedral School, while the popularity and substantial output of the troubadours and *trouvères* reflected an already disseminated tradition of French lyric composition.

For the French poets, music was associated above all with the emotions of joy and love. The *Prologue* (c. 1372), one of Machaut’s last compositions and in Kelly’s words, a “mature consideration of the arts he practised most,”<sup>177</sup> describes music as “an art / which likes people to laugh and sing and dance” [“une science / Qui vuet qu’on rie et chante et dance”] (V.199-200).<sup>178</sup> It brings joy, even if its subject matter is sad: “[a]nd if sad things are the theme / Then the style of their treatment / is joyful” [“Et s’on fait de triste matiere, / Si est joieuse la manière / Dou fait [...]”] (157-9). Deschamps presents a similar view in *L’art de dictier* (the most popular prescriptive poetic manual of the time) relating music to the liberal arts. He builds on an earlier tradition by defining music as the “medicine of the seven arts” [“la medicine des vij ars”] (85-6),<sup>179</sup> healing and renewing the hearts and spirits of those fatigued by learning. Machaut, and later Deschamps, formally articulated a view of music that had long been established in France before the fourteenth century.

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<sup>176</sup> Pizzani, p. 137.

<sup>177</sup> Douglas Kelly, *Medieval Imagination: Rhetoric and the Poetry of Courtly Love* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), p. 4.

<sup>178</sup> Quotations from Machaut’s *Prologue* are from the parallel text in *The Fountain of Love (La Fontaine Amoureuse) and Two Other Love Vision Poems*, ed. and trans. R. Barton Palmer (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1993), 1-19.

<sup>179</sup> Eustache Deschamps, *L’Art de dictier*, ed. and trans. Deborah Sinnreich-Levi (East Lansing, MI: Colleagues Press Inc., 1994).

The paradigm shift regarding the usages and capabilities of music from the thirteenth to fourteen centuries resulted in commentaries on the perceived merits of music and poetry. One of these was that music was no longer the sole domain of composer-poets like Machaut. Non-musicians such as Froissart, and later, Chaucer, could employ music and its associated ideas in their poetry.<sup>180</sup> Thus, Kelly argues music was “not essential to the enjoyment or appreciation of thought and sentiment in the poetry of the Second Rhetoric, nor is it ancillary to the art of poetry”—it was “a parallel and independently valid art.”<sup>181</sup> It became common practice for poets to eschew consciously the sung dimension of music altogether. Furthermore, some lyric insertions within longer narratives were explicitly described as spoken or read by characters, rather than sung, one example being the *lai* that Machaut reads to his lady in the *Remede de Fortune* (689-701).<sup>182</sup> Chaucer does this too in an early work: the Black Knight’s lament in *BD* is described as a spoken lyric without a tune (462-4).<sup>183</sup> (It should be noted, however, that this is the only instance in which Chaucer specifies a lyric insertion as being spoken. The rest throughout his works are all described as being sung.<sup>184</sup>) It is useful, when analysing works such as these that combine musical motifs (or material) and poetry, to employ Huot’s phrase, “lyrico-narrative”. This term embraces the dynamic relationship between song and poetry:

Throughout the thirteenth century [there was] a series of poetic experiments aimed at exploring the interaction and conflation of lyric and narrative poetics, resulting in a form of poetic discourse that can be termed “lyrico-narrative”. [...] The lyrico-narrative text is a hybrid entity, a conflation of narrative discourse, normally written and read aloud, and lyric discourse, normally sung. In short, lyricism, the direct oral expression of sentiment, is redefined so as to allow for a written lyric discourse.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Kelly, p. 242.

<sup>181</sup> Kelly, p. 11.

<sup>182</sup> Kelly, p. 7; Guillaume de Machaut, *Le Remede de Fortune*, in *Œuvres*, ed. Ernest Hoepffner, SATF, 3 vols (Paris: 1908-21), II, 1-157.

<sup>183</sup> This is discussed in the following chapter.

<sup>184</sup> Thomas P. Campbell, ‘Machaut and Chaucer: “*Ars nova*” and the Idea of Narrative’, *The Chaucer Review*, 24/4 (1990), 275-289 (p. 276).

<sup>185</sup> Sylvia Huot, *From Song to Book: The Poetics of Writing in Old French Lyric and Lyrical Narrative Poetry* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 83.

Huot's definition also touches on the context from which lyrico-narrative emerges. The forms and techniques of lyrico-narrative were inherited from the thirteenth-century narrative songs of the *trouvères* and troubadours, for whom emotion was prerequisite to lyric composition and singing an expression of *sentement*. The move from thirteenth-century sung lyric to the written lyric of the fourteenth century accompanies a change in attitudes regarding the proper conveyance of emotional authenticity, as argued by Cerquiglini-Toulet. There is an overall shift from singing to writing as the bearer of *sentement*.<sup>186</sup>

Machaut's *Prologue*, for instance, written especially for the compilation of his *oeuvre* near the end of his life, functions as a paratextual key for his collected texts and a guide to his artistic views, outlining the symbiotic functions of text, music, and intellect in creating genuine *sentement*.<sup>187</sup> In his allegorisation of the artistic process, the goddess Nature sends her children, *Scens*, *Retorique*, and *Musique*, to aid Guillaume in writing tales of love: “[a]nd now I entrust you with three of my children/ Who will give you practical knowledge, / And, if you do not recognize them readily, / Their names are Meaning, Rhetoric, and Music” [“Pour ce te bail ci trois de mes enfans / Qui t'en donront la pratique, / Et, se tu n' es d'eulz trois bien congnoissans, / Nommé sont Sens, Retorique, et Musique”] (*Prol.* I.6-9). *Scens*, or Intellect, will guide and spur the imagination, Rhetoric will assist in matters of metre and rhyme, and Music, the bearer of joy, will give him songs that are “true, varied, and pleasurable” [“vorras, divers et deduisans”] (*Prol.*, I.10-18). Machaut's subject matter is then to be inspired by the company of Love's three children, “Sweet Thought, Pleasure, and Hope” [“Doulz Penser, Plaisance, et Esperance”] (III.64). Machaut “actively attempts to bring the poetics of joy and

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<sup>186</sup> Jacqueline Cerquiglini, ‘Le nouveau lyrisme [XIVe-XVe siècle]’, in Daniel Poirion, ed., *Précis de littérature française du moyen âge* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1983), 275-92 (p. 287) ; cited in Elizabeth Eva Leach, ‘Music and Verbal Meaning: Machaut's Polytextual Songs’, *Speculum*, 85/3 (2010), 567-591 (p. 587). On the history of criticism on the interaction between narratives and lyric modes, see Elizabeth Eva Leach, *Guillaume de Machaut: Secretary, Poet, Musician* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2011), p. 47.

<sup>187</sup> Leach, *Machaut*, p. 82.



hope into a written practice predicated on *sentement*.<sup>188</sup> *Sentement*, contained in the *formes fixes*, could then be grafted onto a poem.<sup>189</sup> Furthermore, as attested in the *Remede de Fortune*, the artist must also be true to himself in both natural skill and intention:

Cils qui vuet aucun art aprendre  
A douze choses doit entendre:  
La premiere est qu'il doit eslire  
Celui o uses cuers mieus se tire  
Et ou sa nature l'encline;  
Car la chose envis bien define  
Qu'on vuet encontre son cuer faire,  
Auant Nature li est contraire. (1-8)

He who wishes to learn any art must attend to twelve things. The first is that he should choose something to which his heart is most drawn, or to which his nature inclines, for nothing will turn out well that one tries to do against the grain of one's heart and contrary to nature.<sup>190</sup>

Machaut's presentation of artistic learning and practice in the opening lines appeals to the conventional prerequisites of artistic mastery as endorsed by the arts of the Second Rhetoric. As Kelly argues, the *Remede* also "became inspirational and decisive for the Second Rhetoric because of its authoritative examples of the prominent fixed forms."<sup>191</sup> Machaut writes that the rules are applicable to "[a]rms, love, or any art or kind of writing" ["[a]rmes, amours, autre art ou lettre"] (40). The parallel images of art and deeds of arms and love call attention to the relationship between writing and action. To Machaut and his peers, the poetry created by the gifts of Love and Nature necessitated an authentic connection between poet and lover, student and professional, and finally, poet and dreamer.

This framework led to the complex exposition of experience and identity in dream poetry which extends to the relationships between a witness and participant, a writer and his or her subject, and ultimately art and life. The identity of the poetic "I" or "je" is a complex, central issue for French

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<sup>188</sup> Leach, 'Music and Verbal Meaning', pp. 587-8. On the problem of sorrowful material in songs, see Leach, *Machaut*, pp. 101-2.

<sup>189</sup> Kelly, p. 246

<sup>190</sup> Translation from *Chaucer's Dream Poetry: Sources and Analogues*, ed. and trans. Barry Windeatt (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1982), 58-64 (p. 58).

<sup>191</sup> Kelly, p. 4.

lyrico-narrative, seen from its emergence in *RR*.<sup>192</sup> Huot highlights *RR*'s Pygmalion as a key figure, his miracle "a coming together of dream and reality, art and life."<sup>193</sup> An allegory thus becomes a highly self-reflexive meditation on such relationships as well as the reality or relevance of art. *Sentement* had previously been justified by the performances of the troubadours and *trouvères*, and related to their lived experience in the first person. However, the dream form poses a disjunction between the composer and participant of the tale. The dream frame distances a poet's recounting of a tale from the "dream" proper. The dream unravels in the present so that the audience experiences it simultaneously, as it were, with the dreamer, an effect which is reinforced in narratives in which the dreamer recedes into the background, as will be discussed in relation to Chaucer's *BD*.

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<sup>192</sup> For further detail, see Huot, *Song to Book*, pp. 83-105.

<sup>193</sup> Huot, *Song to Book*, p. 99.

The musical style of the *Ars nova* in fourteenth-century France is defined by two main advancements: the new use of musical notation and the rise of polyphonic composition. Polyphony is defined as the simultaneous expression of multiple voices, and this practice was enabled by the use of musical notation for each voice. Metaphorically speaking, polyphony came to represent the “exceptional power of music [...] to instruct the emotional self through contemplation prompted by the two teachable senses: vision and hearing.”<sup>194</sup> Polyphonic forms of composition beginning with the late medieval motet provided a vehicle for counterpointed texts and music allowing for “aural, visual, numerical, symbolic and other forms of intellectual contemplation.”<sup>195</sup> The motet was a popular French form in which “newly composed upper voices, each carrying its own text, combine with a fragment of existing chant.”<sup>196</sup> The addition of secular upper voices to the monophonic plainchant of the Mass is present in the openings of many motets.<sup>197</sup> Plumley summarises the effect: “In addition to this structural combination of old and new, vivid intertextual play is frequently occasioned by this superimposition of multiple texts.”<sup>198</sup> The combination of secular lyric and devotional song brings the theme of love to the forefront. The aim of superimposing multiple voices and lyrics in polyphonic song is to transform and ultimately transgress the effect of hearing each part individually. Machaut’s aim in combining poetry and music is similarly transcendent. As Huot explains, “[f]or Machaut, poetry and music are not only the interface between Eros and Nature, but also between Eros, Nature, and

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<sup>194</sup> Leach, ‘Machaut’s Polytextual Songs’, p. 591.

<sup>195</sup> Margaret Bent, ‘The late-medieval motet’, in *Companion to Medieval and Renaissance Music*, ed. Tess Knighton and David Fallows (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 114-19 (p. 114).

<sup>196</sup> Yolanda Plumley, *The Art of Grafted Song: Citation and Allusion in the Age of Machaut* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 7.

<sup>197</sup> Leach, *Machaut*, p. 99.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

God”,<sup>199</sup> which are brought together most strongly through musical poetry because music goes beyond language.<sup>200</sup> The idea that music may go beyond language touches on the second major development in musical practice of the Middle Ages. Musical notation drew attention to song as definable in visual (i.e., written), in addition to aural, terms. The simultaneous delivery of separate texts in polyphony also emphasises a key difference between the public and private experience of a song and its lyrics. As Kelly argues, music “predominates on festive, joyful occasions”, while the act of reading poetry lends itself more to solitude, retrospection, introspection, and communication.<sup>201</sup> In polyphony, it is highly difficult if not impossible to discern individually the multiple voices, so the song is apprehended as a musical, rather than verbal dialogue. The lyrics can only be properly understood if read and compared apart from the performance. Symbolically, words, musical notation, and polyphony thus accentuated the duality of public and private (or performative and reflective) experiences of music. Furthermore, a multiplicity of voices, musical and verbal, creates something that transcends the effect of any of these elements in isolation.

Literary intertextuality was also paralleled in music. Citation was a form of musical borrowing that encompassed “quotation, citation, allusion, and other forms of modelling [...] undertaken consciously by authors”.<sup>202</sup> Techniques and tropes such as *contrafacta*, the refrain (which often functioned like a “courtly aphorism”<sup>203</sup>), lyric tagging, and grafting, result in “a profoundly collaborative lyric culture” engaging with authority and novelty.<sup>204</sup> Medieval dream poetry is a characteristically intertextual genre, incorporating antique, biblical and contemporary material from

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<sup>199</sup> Sylvia Huot, ‘Reliving the *Roman de la Rose*: Allegory and Irony in Machaut’s *Voir Dit*’, in *Chaucer’s French Contemporaries: The Poetry/Poetics of Self and Tradition*, ed. R. Barton Palmer (New York: AMS, 1999), 47-69 (p. 64). (Cited in Leach, *Machaut*, p. 100.)

<sup>200</sup> Leach, *Machaut*, p. 100.

<sup>201</sup> Kelly, p. 11.

<sup>202</sup> Plumley, p. 6.

<sup>203</sup> Plumley, p. 8.

<sup>204</sup> Plumley, p. 10. These terms are all defined in Plumley’s ‘Introduction’, pp. 4-11.

literary and musical contexts. The height of such collaborations is arguably to be found in Chaucer's works, which in turn built on the intertextualities of his French sources.

Arising from the new approach to music and its self-conscious referentiality and artifice is a concern with the extent to which art may be truthful and edifying. This concern is found in the text most “central to Old French lyrico-narrative poetry” and the later dream vision genre, the *Roman de la rose*, in which, according to Huot, “the process of writing is thematised and foregrounded as a creative, rather than merely duplicative, activity.”<sup>205</sup> As mentioned earlier, many medieval theorists addressed the concept of art as representation before Aristotle’s theory of *mimesis* was widespread. (A version of the theory appeared in Averroes’ *Middle Commentary on the Poetics*, translated into Latin in 1254, though Averroes’ interpretation is significantly different from Aristotle’s original concept.<sup>206</sup> An accurate translation of the *Poetics* by William of Moerbeke in 1278 was “virtually ignored”.<sup>207</sup>) Similar ideas from Plato’s theory of forms complement a wider trend of viewing poetry as a source of truth, a theme which occurs in the works of many medieval theorists. Plato considered an image a “dream made for people who are awake” (*Sophist* 266c).<sup>208</sup> Plato and Aristotle discuss the nature of mimetic objects, also called images. Aristotle argues in the *Poetics* (1447a) and *Politics* (1340a) that music is a variety of *mimesis* and it can represent qualities of character; this view was common view throughout antiquity.<sup>209</sup> The view that music is representative and imitative is also expressed in Plato’s *Republic* (401b-403c) and *Laws* (668a).<sup>210</sup> Sörbom has attempted a reconstruction of the theory of music as representation as outlined by Aristotle and Plato in various works: music has the capacity to affect the soul of the listener

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<sup>205</sup> Huot, *Song to Book*, p. 4.

<sup>206</sup> Daniel Javitch, ‘The Assimilation of Aristotle’s *Poetics* in Sixteenth-Century Italy’, in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, 9 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990-2001), III: *The Renaissance*, ed. Glyn P. Norton (1999), 53-65 (p. 54).

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Plato, *Sophist*, trans. Nicholas P. White, in *Plato: Complete Works*, 235-293, 266c. Discussed in Göran Sörbom, ‘Aristotle on Music as Representation’, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 52/1 (1994), 37-46 (p. 40).

<sup>209</sup> Sörbom, p. 37.

<sup>210</sup> These passages are used as examples in Sörbom, p. 45.

in the same way that tragedy fosters the learning of universal truths, not through argument, but by arousing the emotions, pity and fear.<sup>211</sup> Hearing is also unique among the other senses because music can represent character [“ethos”] (*Politics* 1340a).<sup>212</sup>

Medieval theories of truth abound in scriptural discourses centred around the late-fifth or early-sixth century *Celestial Hierarchy*, attributed to Pseudo-Dionysius, among the works studied in the University of Paris.<sup>213</sup> Gallus, Robert Grosseteste, and Richard of Saint Victor show his influence when addressing the issue of divine symbols leading to holy truths. French literary theorists expressed particular concern with the representational and affective qualities of art by emphasising the emotional significance of music. Machaut and Deschamps focus on music as a healing art linked to spiritual joy. As mentioned above, Deschamps followed the classical tradition in describing it as uniquely pleasurable, and the “medicine” of the liberal arts (*Art de dictier* 85). In the *Prologue*, Machaut names Nature’s artistic and Love’s material gifts, which, when employed in composition, are intended to inspire heavenly qualities such as pure joy and spiritual replenishment in the mortal, mutable realm. One may be tempted to read the passage as portraying the poet as a divine mouthpiece or a Hellenic prophet. It is implied that the significance of art resides in its ability to transcend the physical, sublunary realm to offer a glimpse of ideal and universal joy; as such, the poet is privileged for his divinely ordained ability to carry out the task of composition. In Machaut’s works, knowledge cannot be gained by the senses alone: sensory impressions, represented by the conflicting registers of polyphonic song, produce a confusion akin to the experience of love.<sup>214</sup> Hearing these poems in their musical setting is not enough—they must also be read and rationalised.<sup>215</sup> Although the French poet-

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<sup>211</sup> Sörbom, p. 43.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Kevin Corrigan and L. Michael Harrington, ‘Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite’, *SEP* (Summer 2018 Edition), <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/pseudo-dionysius-areopagite>> [accessed 27 February 2019]; A. J. Minnis, A. B. Scott and David Wallace, *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism c. 1100-c. 1375: The Commentary Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), p. 166.

<sup>214</sup> Leach, ‘Machaut’s Polytextual Songs’, p. 590.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

composers are unlikely to have been familiar with the Aristotelian theory of *mimesis*, the view of art as a morally instructive medium is conveyed in the authoritative texts of the dream vision genre and in the wider intellectual tradition, as will be discussed in due course.

Deschamps' *Art de dictier* significantly helped formalise late-medieval ideas of music. It includes a discussion of the seven liberal arts and a prescriptive poetics and as mentioned describes music as a curative art (85):

[T]ant que par sa melodie delectable les cuers et esperis de ceuls qui aux diz ars, par pensée, ymaginacion et labours de bras estoient travailliez, pesans et ennuiez, sont medicinez et recreez, et plus habiles apres a estudiez et labourez aux autres vj ars dessus nommez. (94-99)

[B]y means of music's delightful melody, the hearts and spirits of those who were fatigued, burdened and bored in practicing the named arts through thought, imagination, and work of their hands, are healed, renewed and rendered more able thereafter to study and work on the other six arts named above.

Deschamps articulates, like his teacher, the powerful emotional effects of music, a view established in France long before the fourteenth century, and which differs from the antique philosophical distrust of affective music. Deschamps' praise of the soul-reviving qualities of song is also a significant departure from the rigid mathematical terms of the philosophical theorists.<sup>216</sup>

The paradigm shift regarding the usages and capabilities of music from the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries was accompanied by discourse elaborating on the perceived merits of music and poetry. Deschamps' classification of music into the "artificial" and "natural" ["artificiele" and "naturelle"] (100-1) marks another move away from the earlier theoretical focus on the divine music. These two terms are not new: Bower traces the origins to Byzantine musical thought in the works of Pseudo-Dionysius, translated by Eriugena in the ninth century.<sup>217</sup> As noted above, rhythmic poetry was classified as a type of music by John of Garland as well. Deschamps' system is thus a revival of

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<sup>216</sup> There are a series of debates regarding the "grammar" of music (Cf. Bent) and notions of lyric (Cf. Wimsatt, Bent, and Butterfield).

<sup>217</sup> Calvin M. Bower, 'Natural and Artificial Music: The Origins and Development of an Aesthetic Concept', *Musica Disciplina*, 25 (1971), 17-33 (p. 24).



earlier views, and, as Wimsatt indicates, definitions of natural music after Deschamps reflect the survival of these ideas in France throughout the medieval period.<sup>218</sup>

Two points are emphasised in Deschamps' delineation: poetry, or indeed any verbal art, is a type of music, each is a worthy art form in itself, and the combination of the two is aesthetically and spiritually pleasing (160-70). While artificial music describes the six notes used for singing, vocal harmonising, and the teaching of music, Deschamps writes: "The other music is called natural because it cannot be taught to anyone "unless his spirit is naturally inclined to it" ["L'autre musique est appellee naturelle pour ce qu'elle ne puet estre aprinse a nul, se son propre couraige naturelment ne s'i applique"] (123-5). He continues, mentioning various metrical forms: "It is an oral music producing words in meter" ["es une musique de bouche en proferant paroules metrifiees"], sometimes in *lais*, *balades*, single and double *rondeaux*, and *chansons baladées* (125-8). Here, Deschamps directly attributes a poetic value to music. He also divides natural music into four types: vowels, liquids, semi-vowels, and mute letters (197-228).

Deschamps' *Art de dictier* preserved the formal qualities of the *formes fixes*, ensuring their distinctive features were recognisable even in the absence of musical notation. During the separation of notation and text, popular *formes* such as the *ballade*, *rondeau*, *virelay*, *lay*, and *chant royal* which originated as musical pieces became common currency in writing.<sup>219</sup> (According to Wimsatt, other short lyric poems of varying versification such as complaints and prayers are also mixed in with the *formes fixes* found in manuscripts.<sup>220</sup>) Even dance forms such as the *ballade*, *rondeau*, and *virelay* remained attached to their performative origins when evoked in rhyme and metre. The widespread familiarity of song forms, along with other factors, contributed to the eventual disposal of accompanying

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries*, p. 6.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

notation in the transition from the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries.<sup>221</sup> The first collection of Machaut's works during his lifetime, now known as Manuscript A (c. early 1370s<sup>222</sup>), is evidence of the widespread reallocation of non-notated musical material in literary contexts. Machaut himself likely supervised the creation of this and another manuscript of his *oeuvre*, MSS Bibl. Nat. fr. 1586 and 1584, respectively.<sup>223</sup> Huot notes, however, that there is no definitive evidence to prove or disprove Machaut's involvement in the creation of MS 1586, though there is substantial circumstantial evidence.<sup>224</sup>

Deschamps' defense of natural music, or poetry, as superior to artificial, or instrumental music reflects a theoretical departure from Machaut and other poet-composers.<sup>225</sup> It is questionable whether later poets' increased preference for natural music is due to a perceived inferiority in artificial music, as opposed to a simple lack of musical expertise, which Deschamps also mentions:

[E]t que les faiseurs d'icelle ne saignent pas communement la musique artificiele ne donner chant par art de notes a ce qu'ilz font, toutesvoies est appellee musique ceste science naturele pour ce que les diz et chancons par eulx faiz ou les livres metrifiez se lisent de bouche, et proferent par voix non pas chantable, tant que les douches paroles ainsis faictes et recorderes par voix plaisant aux escoutans qui les oyent, si que [...] (135-145)

[E]ven though those who make natural music generally don't know artificial music or how to give their lyrics an artful melody, nevertheless, this natural science is always called music because the *ditz*, *chancons*, and *livres metrifiez* that they compose are read out loud and produced by a voice that can't sing in such a way that the sweet words thus composed, recited aloud, are pleasing to those who hear them, as it used to be [...]

The division of text and song also preserves pre-established associations with the acts of reading and performance or listening: a distinction is made between song on the one hand, and reading and poetry on the other, the former associated with public spaces, festivities, and celebrations; the latter viewed as more private, contemplative, and communicative (165-180).<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries*, p. 22.

<sup>222</sup> Date attributed by Leach, 'Machaut's Polytextual Songs', p. 587.

<sup>223</sup> Huot, *Song to Book*, p. 242.

<sup>224</sup> On the evidence supporting MS 1586, see Huot, *Song to Book*, p. 246. On MS 1584, p. 274.

<sup>225</sup> Deborah M. Sinnreich-Levi, 'Introduction' to Deschamps, *L'Art de dictier*, ed. Sinnreich-Levi, 1-52 (p. 11).

<sup>226</sup> Kelly, p. 9.

Furthermore, this departure from an understanding of music as a primarily aural experience exists alongside a tendency to employ lyric to gesture toward changes in ideas of composition, meaning, and performance. After the *Roman de la rose*, Machaut and Chaucer perhaps demonstrate these themes most profoundly in their works. Lyric insertion and the use of musical material call attention to their own artifice. As Butterfield argues, French *romans* with lyric insertions “internalise the various stages of a song’s existence: its production, performance, reception, and reproduction.”<sup>227</sup> The transliteration and transformation of performance into text results in writing which “functions as more than one medium, representing more than one kind of sound. [...] [P]oetry and music forge together the sound of the page and the silence of the imagination.”<sup>228</sup> Butterfield mentions another critical point regarding the effect of music on narrative time:

[S]ong occupies a place between the temporal or ephemeral, and the iterable. Every song is a unique, singular performance, and an inherently repeatable event. A stanzaic song combines both elements by being constructed from a repeated form that produces a temporal but also recurrent pattern of sound.<sup>229</sup>

Music is portrayed as an experiential phenomenon that involves the imagination in the act of reading. As such, music and musical referents may be understood as adding an extra dimension to poetry. As the following section will show, French poets valued music for its privileged relationship with emotion, which itself competes with the function of truth as the aim of art. In dream poetry, the conceptualisation of truth as expressed through veiled symbols becomes more complex when poetry is combined with music. Because music has the power to stir the emotions, and by extension, the soul, it is possible that non-verbal or extra-linguistic material can interact with abstract symbols in ways that language and reason alone cannot.

Music was thus no longer the sole domain of composer-poets like Machaut. Non-musicians such as Froissart (who nevertheless desired some of his poems, such as the *Fonteinne amoureuse*, to be

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<sup>227</sup> Butterfield, *Poetry and Music*, p. 56.

<sup>228</sup> Butterfield, *Poetry and Music*, p. 9.

<sup>229</sup> Butterfield, *Poetry and Music*, p. 14.

read and sung) and later, Chaucer, could employ music and its associated ideas in their poetry.<sup>230</sup> It became common practice for poets to eschew consciously the sung dimension of music altogether. Most of Machaut's lyrics in the aforementioned manuscripts lack musical accompaniment. It has been suggested that the lyrics are more consistent with the idea of music as number, further evidence of regard for form and metre as more significant numerically than melodic qualities such as pitch ratios.<sup>231</sup> It is possible that some of these musical elements were meant to be performed to a well-known tune befitting the given *forme*, a practice known as *contrafacta*.<sup>232</sup> This was viable because, according to Kelly, "the melodic structure of most forms in the Second Rhetoric [was] well known".<sup>233</sup> Huot argues that all of Machaut's musical pieces would have been performed, though can also be read as poems.<sup>234</sup> The absence of notation or other markers of musical originality indicates the primacy of form and text: as Kelly observes, "for the majority of the fixed forms by Machaut himself there is no music, nor is any space left in the manuscripts for music to be added, even in manuscripts whose copying he supervised."<sup>235</sup>

The history of musical ideas that shaped the presentation of music in Middle English dream visions is as complex as dream visions themselves. Calcidius and Proclus interpret the *Timaeus*' notion of cosmic harmony distinctly: Calcidius' Christianised translation and commentary, by far the best known version of the *Timaeus* in the medieval Latin west, underlined the importance of abstract, harmonic ratio in the creation of the universe, and the harmonisation of corporeal and incorporeal qualities in the union of body and soul. Proclus' commentary, though lesser known, influenced medieval ideas of music indirectly. It represents a different form of Neoplatonism, complementing the source with a wider range of material (Platonic, Aristotelian, and Pythagorean), infusing the text

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<sup>230</sup> Kelly, pp. 8, 242.

<sup>231</sup> Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>232</sup> Plumley, p. 4.

<sup>233</sup> Kelly, p. 253.

<sup>234</sup> Huot, *Song to Book*, p. 301.

<sup>235</sup> Kelly, p. 7.

with pagan resonance, ascribing a hierarchy of corporeality to divine beings, and attributing the music of the spheres to celestial Sirens, second to the abstract harmony of the Muses. Proclus' gradations in the Chain of Being facilitate a stronger relationship between the nature of the microcosm and macrocosm. Echoes of this attitude are present in Macrobius' explanation of dreams as a conduit for divine truths in the form of sensible symbols, such as the cosmic music heard by Scipio in his dream, as well as the mysticism of Pseudo-Dionysius, who drew heavily on Proclus. Boethius' *De institutione musica* then classified music according to its level of abstraction, into *musica mundana*, *humana*, and *instrumentalis*, maintaining, like Plato, the definition of music as ratio, while the *Consolation* applied ideas of harmony and concord in an allegorical context. In the *Marriage of Philology and Mercury*, Martianus allegorised the liberal arts and personified Harmony, giving equal importance to instrumental and abstract music. Finally, French developments in musical practice during the *Ars nova* and the relationship of music to text in the poetic theory of the Second Rhetoric introduced significant changes to the way practical music was composed, performed, and valued. The use of musical notation allowed for polyphonic composition, which in turn invited a reconsideration of the relationship between melody and text, and as the next chapter argues, literary interpretations of polyvocality and multifaceted symbolism. Machaut and Deschamps championed the human importance of music and narrative, as creating *sentement*, and leading to truth, *entendement*, used lyric insertion as a vehicle for these ideas, and maintained the intrinsic musicality of lyric narrative, even in the absence of musical notation. These ideas are a necessary context for understanding the concept of music and the use of musical forms in Middle English dream poetry to express profound truths about the relationship of the individual to the universal harmony that is love—both human and divine.

## SOUND AND MUSIC IN MIDDLE ENGLISH DREAM VISIONS

Practical and speculative music are portrayed in many Middle English dream visions, primarily through some of the fundamental characteristics of the genre: troubled narrators, often ‘out of tune’ emotionally, romantically, and spiritually, are granted relief through intimation of the universal harmony that binds all, whether literally, as when Scipio hears the music of the spheres, leading him to understand the significance of individual lives within the commonwealth and the universal scheme, or symbolically, as when Boethius is led by Lady Philosophy to an enlightened view of the relationship between sublunary Fortune and divine Providence. In dream poetry, these narrators awaken to find themselves in new places, often a *locus amoenus* in the springtime, when the climate is temperate and Nature is renewed after the desolation of winter. These scenes are, significantly, imbued with the sound of birds, typically the nightingale’s love song, which can evoke a variety of musical meanings, from instrumental performance, sometimes accompanied by human lyric text, to inspiring bodily lust or more elevated courtly love, to symbolising the presence of abstract, divine harmony and love in the natural world.

The dream visions that are the main focus of this chapter, Chaucer’s *Book of the Duchess* (*BD*), *The House of Fame* (*HF*), *The Parliament of Fowls* (*PF*), and James I of Scotland’s *Kingis Quair* (*KQ*), each address the idea of music in significant and distinctive ways. *BD* engages with music and meaningful sounds, primarily in relation to classical and French literary genres and the poet-dreamer’s relationship to them, ultimately using lyric narrative in a new way, to address the reality of bereavement. *HF* addresses the problem of authority, allegorising the generation and transmission of literature as oral narrative, and portraying the effects of sound on one’s experience of reality by personifying tidings and utterances as pilgrims to Fame. *PF* displays the full range of musical and amusical categories through singing and speaking birds engaged in a seemingly irresolvable debate, but finally achieves a

symbolic resolution through an acceptance of polyvocality as part of the *discordia concors* of the sublunary sphere, and an enlightened view of the harmonious passage of time. The fifteenth-century dream vision, *KQ*, adopts some of the aforementioned motifs while challenging the categories of musical, amusical, and verbal meaning, and in contrast to Chaucer's dream visions, shows how harmony can be lost and regained in both the dream and reality. *KQ* is distinct from the other texts in that it is a Scottish dream vision dated to the fifteenth century. Nevertheless, it is often categorised as belonging to the "Chaucerian" tradition of writing in the fifteenth century, an admittedly elusive term that is applied to a wide variety of texts and writers.<sup>236</sup> As the later analysis will show, James I of Scotland consciously emulates the style and subject matter of Chaucer's dream visions, which, to a certain extent, may qualify the text as Chaucerian. More pertinent to this thesis, however, is how *KQ* uses familiar styles, techniques, and motifs to examine the effect of *musica* on the dreamer's perception and understanding. It is through the dreamer's perception of sound and music that we observe his inner dissonance turning to harmony. Ultimately, James' engagement with Chaucerian themes is not merely emulative: the spiritual harmony located within the dream is realised in waking, as the narrator assumes control of love and good fortune in his life.

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<sup>236</sup> Julia Boffey, 'Introduction' to *Fifteenth-Century English Dream Visions: An Anthology*, ed. Julia Boffey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1-13 (p. 5).

*Recollection and Lyric in The Book of the Duchess*

Chaucer's early to middle works in particular, *BD* (1368-72), *LGW* (1372-80), *Anelida and Arcite* (1372-80), *PF* (1380-87), and *Tr.* (1382-86), demonstrate the technique of inserting musical and lyrical components such as *ballades* and complaints, emulating the form and function of Machaut's musical insertions.<sup>237</sup> Chaucer's dream narratives all draw upon the French lyric tradition, though none more extensively, or more metatextually, than *BD*. Generally considered to be Chaucer's earliest extant literary work, *BD* is significantly influenced by his French lyric narrative analogues, perhaps more overtly than any of his other dream visions, and also resembles French poetic practices in its connection to a noble patron, John of Gaunt, upon whom the Black Knight is modelled, and his wife, Blanche, Duchess of Lancaster, the inspiration for White, the knight's deceased lover.<sup>238</sup> Chaucer's use of music and musical themes in *BD* evokes the triad of musical Boethian categories as well as the nuances of French poetics, composition, and performance. His adoption of French narrative material and lyric technique reveals, as Campbell argues, a "broad awareness of musical technique, style, and instrumentation."<sup>239</sup> *BD* survives in three manuscripts and Thynne's 1532 edition of Chaucer's works, the last of which is the only complete copy.<sup>240</sup> Its date of composition is thought to be around the same time that Fragment "A" of his translation of *RR*, *The Romaunt of the Rose* (*Rom.*), and the *ABC* are likely to have been written.<sup>241</sup> It opens with a sleepless and probably lovesick narrator who reads Ovid's tale of Ceyx and Alcyone from the *Metamorphoses* (*Met.*). He then falls asleep and experiences a series of dream episodes, including a scene in his dream bedroom, a hunt led by Octavian, after which he is

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<sup>237</sup> Campbell, p. 276. Estimated dates of composition are from Larry D. Benson, 'Canon and Chronology', in *Riverside*, xxii-xxv (p. xxv).

<sup>238</sup> For a list of criticism about the poem's patronage and historical circumstances, see Colin Wilcockson, 'Explanatory Notes' to *BD* in *Riverside*, 966-76 (p. 966).

<sup>239</sup> Campbell, p. 275.

<sup>240</sup> The manuscripts are Fairfax 16, Bodley 638, Tanner 346, and Thynne's edition. Larry D. Benson, 'Textual Notes' to *BD*, *Riverside*, 1136-8 (p. 1136).

<sup>241</sup> Benson, 'Canon and Chronology', *Riverside*, xxv.



led by a whelp into an idyllic forest, where he comes across the bereaved Black Knight and listens to his complaint.

The style and matter of *BD*, while heavily indebted to the French tradition, display Chaucer's knowledge of courtly literature and technical versatility, structuring the latter part of the poem around the Black Knight's lyric complaint and the dreamer's refrain-like responses. Palmer, and later Ciccone, argue that "roughly two-thirds" of the poem derive from French sources.<sup>242</sup> Furthermore, of the five major analogues identified by Windeatt, three are structured around lyric insertions: Machaut's *Dit de la fonteinne amoureuse* contains a *complainte*, a *confort*, and a *rondel*, while his *Remede de fortune* contains no less than seven complete songs (a *lai*, *complainte*, *rondeau*, two *ballades*, a *virelai*, and a *chanson roial*), and Froissart's *Paradys d'amours* displays a sizeable musical repertoire as well, with a *complainte*, two *rondels*, a *lai*, a *virelai*, and a *ballade*.<sup>243</sup> *BD* displays Chaucer's engagement with French lyric writings and techniques as well as his adaptation thereof to suit new aesthetic and philosophical ideas.<sup>244</sup> He integrates French musical forms and motifs—*musica practica*—with the *musica speculativa* of Neoplatonist philosophy and scholastic allegory and self-consciously locates himself in relation to earlier literature in order to produce from these sources something excitingly new: namely the beginnings of an English dream vision tradition. *BD* alludes to both abstract and instrumental music in order to consider, more broadly, the dreamer's grief as an emotional and spiritual dissonance that isolates him from participating in the natural, harmonious concord of love.

However, Chaucer also uses amusical symbols in *BD*—horns, percussive bells, cries and moans—to examine culturally defined meanings associated with certain sounds, and the way musical

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<sup>242</sup> R. Barton Palmer, 'Rereading Guillaume de Machaut's Vision of Love: Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* as Bricolage', in David Galef, ed., *Second Thoughts: A Focus on Rereading* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 169-95 at (p. 185); Nancy Ciccone, 'The Chamber, the Man in Black, and the Structure of Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*', *The Chaucer Review*, 44/2 (2009), 205-223 (p. 206).

<sup>243</sup> Windeatt, *Chaucer's Dream Poetry: Sources and Analogues*.

<sup>244</sup> For a close examination of Chaucer's play on French source material and genres in *BD*, see Butterfield, 'Lyric and Elegy in *The Book of the Duchess*', *Medium Aevum*, 60/1 (1991), 33-60. On Latin sources, see Horowitz, 'Aesthetic of Permeability', p. 267.

and amusical sound generates actions and reactions. A readerly acquaintance with contemporary musical “modes of thought” reveals a narrative style which is “open-ended, simultaneous [and] contrapuntal”, to borrow Campbell’s useful phrase, and provides a relevant theoretical basis for exploring the relationship between emotion and memory and the sonic elements that express and inform both.<sup>245</sup> In his analysis of Machaut’s influence on Chaucer’s works, Campbell identifies three examples of conceptual dissonance: the first is the “reluctance to resolve ambiguities or justify the presentation of disparate, even exclusive, solutions to a problem”; then a “preference for the simultaneous, rather than serial, depiction of related events”; and finally a “preference for concatenation, where several perspectives, situations, or scenes are deftly nestled beside, or inside, one another.”<sup>246</sup> These ideas, as I will argue, may all be applied to *BD*, and even to the characteristic musical symbolism, allegory, and narrative layering of later Middle English dream visions.

As Edwards argues, Chaucer’s dream visions “represent a sustained reflection on the nature and devices of art”, engaging with both emotion and hermeneutics.<sup>247</sup> More specifically, Travis argues that “[t]hroughout his career Chaucer focuses his critical attention on noise [...] as a potential site of epistemological transformation, poetic pleasure, and the liberating opportunities of social change.”<sup>248</sup> Though Travis’ view is aimed at the relationship of sound to politics, his identification of Chaucer’s fascination with “the resistance of noise to our understanding” and his likening of this quality to “poetry’s resistance to our traditional modes of literary explication” are helpful in understanding the application of musical and amusical sounds in the *BD*.<sup>249</sup> The *BD*-narrator’s insistence that “no man had the wit / To cone wel my sweven rede” (278-9) early in the poem suggests a greater task than

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<sup>245</sup> Campbell, p. 284.

<sup>246</sup> Campbell, pp. 277-9.

<sup>247</sup> Robert R. Edwards, *The Dream of Chaucer: Representation and Reflection in the Early Narratives* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989), p. xvi. Discussed in T.S. Miller, ‘Writing Dreams to Good: Reading as Writing and Writing as Reading in Chaucer’s Dream Visions’, *Style*, 45/3 (2011), 528-548.

<sup>248</sup> Peter W. Travis, *Disseminal Chaucer: Rereading The Nun’s Priest’s Tale* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), p. 204.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*

dream interpretation, and sound symbolism is one of the poem's primary means of investigating emotional and aesthetic kinds of truth. Indeed, Chaucer effectively employs non-musical aural phenomena in *BD*, namely in the hunt (344-386), and the final tolling of the bell (1322-3), to disrupt associative instincts. Of Chaucer's dream visions, *BD* is perhaps the most self-conscious of its own artifice. The poet presents serial, yet also recursive and self-reflexive sounds through the course of the dream, before settling on a resolution, both thematically—to the knight's sorrow—and musically—concluding his lay. This resolution surpasses the achievement of truth attempted by other sonic modes of thought, expressing *sentement* in terms of coming to terms with and expressing the profound depths of emotion caused by true love and its loss, and a transcendent truth of becoming attuned with a perceived harmony that binds all life. It is only after the concatenation of the theme of harmonious truth throughout the dream's episodes with the final answer to the dreamer's question to the knight—that White is dead—that *BD*'s iterations of dissonance are fully identified, contextualised, and resolved.

Furthermore, *BD* deconstructs French use of the poetic "I" through parallel perspectives that may be understood as functioning as a concatenation or polyphonic song, of the dreamer and the knight, that blur the distinction between the primary emotional experience, the creation of lyric *sentement*, and the convergence of the two in a personal and poetic truth comparable to *entendement*. Literary allusion, like lyric grafting, recontextualises stock conventions and motifs as part of the dreamer's emotional experience, and the dream vision transports him through multiple narrative frames. Nevertheless, the dreamer-narrator remains an outsider—an observer, a reader, or listener—throughout much of the text, entering and exiting scenes belonging to other poets even as they are witnessed with his own eyes. He first reads Ovid (40-230), then in the dream observes images from stories of Troy and RR (321-334), after which he hears love's song (294-320) but is not inspired to love. He then joins and departs from a courtly hunt, and follows a whelp into a *locus amoenus* ("pleasant

place”) and sees life as it was in the Golden Age. It is in this context, as the following section demonstrates, that the dreamer can hear the knight’s words as if from a new perspective. Fein argues that the protagonists of Chaucer’s dream visions “encounter things alien to themselves that force self-recognitions. New knowledge arrives through jarring shifts in perspective [...] accompanied by surreal encounter and irrational occurrence.”<sup>250</sup> The encounter with the Black Knight then pins the dream’s protean subject matter down to an “I-persona” that parallels the pre-*somnium* description of the dreamer. The lovesick dreamer ultimately confronts himself in the Black Knight’s complaint, leading to a conclusion joining art and emotion.

Aesthetic instincts are challenged in *BD* (as well as the other dream visions that will be discussed) by Chaucer’s use of two main musical motifs: the birdsong and the complaint. Chaucer’s consciousness of his relationship to the French tradition and preoccupation with genuine *sentement* is evoked in the initial presentation of the dreamer as a Machauldian character. The images of *RR* and stories of Troy which situate the dreamer within the world of the *dit* are physically and metaphorically transcended. Davis supports Boardman’s view that *BD* presents the French lyric tradition as “unable to express profound human experiences directly”,<sup>251</sup> as well as Butterfield’s observation of Machaut’s “discrepancy between *sentement* and poetic expression” and Chaucer’s re-adoption of the theme.<sup>252</sup> The reconsideration of aural meaning is applied to music to facilitate the dreamer’s repeated questioning of the Knight, as the inadequacy of the stylised complaint as an artistic device for addressing the reality of death is made jarringly clear by the end of the conversation. The poet’s newfound ability “to putte this sweven in ryme” (1332) implies that it is only by departing from established modes of aural understanding that the poet’s voice may be found.

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<sup>250</sup> Susanna Fein, ‘Other Thought-Worlds’, in *A Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Peter Brown (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 332-348 (p. 332).

<sup>251</sup> Phillip C. Boardman, ‘Courtly Language and the Strategy of a Consolation in the *Book of the Duchess*’, *ELH*, 44 (1977), 567-79 (p. 568); Steven Davis, ‘Guillaume de Machaut, Chaucer’s *Book of the Duchess*, and the Chaucer Tradition’, *The Chaucer Review*, 36/4 (2002), 391-405, (p. 400).

<sup>252</sup> Butterfield, ‘Lyric and Elegy’, p. 50; Davis, p. 400.

My analysis, in light of this implication, focuses on the central musical motifs that roughly correspond to the structure of the dream: the horn and birdsong, the Black Knight's lament, and the horn/bell combination which concludes the dream. There is some sonic material preceding the dream in the Ovidian tale (the "dedly slepyng soun" in the cave of Morpheus, for example (162)), though this has been discussed in depth by other critics.<sup>253</sup> The first third presents a dream world that is reassuringly recognisable, from the bedroom, which contextualises the dream within the literary landscape of French lyric poetry, to the conventional birdsong and the courtly hunt. The birdsong is *BD*'s first overtly musical motif. An extended description of it follows on from the dreamer's awakening in a dream-bedchamber that has been transformed into an ekphrastic literary artefact.<sup>254</sup> The swelling of the birdsong causes the chamber to "rynge" (312), symbolically vivifying the tales of Trojan lovers and scenes from *RR* depicted on the chamber's walls and stained-glass windows. The birds are cast as angelic musicians performing a divine service. The sung melody is "a thing of heven" (308) and is emblematic of divine "armony" (313). The song embodies the three Boethian categories of music, with the birds functioning as instruments of *musica mundana*, while their song is simultaneously emphasised as a craft, or *instrumentalis*, albeit seemingly superior to human skill:

For instrument nor melodye  
 Was nowhere herd yet half so swete,  
 Nor of accord half so mete;  
 For ther was noon of hem that feyned  
 To synge, for ech of hem hym peyned  
 To fynde out mery crafty notes.  
 They ne spared not her throttes. (314-20)

The song is connected to *musica humana* through the repetition of "acord" (305, 316), linking the traditional association of medieval literary birdsong with love, generation, and renewal to natural

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<sup>253</sup> See Denis Walker, 'Narrative Inconclusiveness and Consolatory Dialectic in *The Book of the Duchess*', *The Chaucer Review*, 18/1 (1983), 1-17; Diane M. Ross, 'The Play of Genres in *The Book of the Duchess*', *The Chaucer Review*, 19/1 (1984), 1-13.

<sup>254</sup> This is discussed in the chapter on visual art in *BD*.

human desire. As a result, the song symbolically unites the mundane, sublime, and artistic (including the reverberating walls) under a supreme cosmic harmony in the call to love.<sup>255</sup>

Birdsong heard at the beginning of a love vision is of course conventional, as is Chaucer's description of the song. Its inclusion establishes musical harmony as a transcendent symbol of love, though it does not inspire such a feeling in the dreamer. Rather, the song may be viewed as encouraging literary exploration, since it coaxes the dreamer out of his personal literary consciousness in order to join a more active one: Octavian's hunt. Hart hunting was both a real noble pursuit as well as a metaphor for the pursuit of courtly love.<sup>256</sup> The scene also contains *BD*'s second major sonic motif, the sounding of the hunting horn, the juxtaposition of which with the heavenly birdsong is linked by the theme of love but also arguably creates dissonance—between the celebration of natural concord and regeneration, and human contrivances devised in pursuit of earthly love, as well as the uneasy relationship between the slaying of the hart and the consummation of earthly desire.

Following the earlier passage by twenty-five lines, the description of the first blow of the horn is roughly the same length as the section detailing the birdsong. The two sounds are dissonant in various ways, namely in the comparison of audible music sung by a choir of symbolic angels that represents inaudible divine harmony, and the horn as a product of the human domain, its percussive sound perhaps only barely classifiable as a kind of *musica instrumentalis*. It may be considered in terms of its amusicality: its purpose is purely functional rather than aesthetic, unable to create melody, and is communicative according to a short set of defined rhythms used to direct a hunt. As Scott-Macnab writes, "The medieval hunting horn was a simple instrument, capable of producing only one tone, so that different signals had to consist of varying combinations of long and short notes."<sup>257</sup> Other minor

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<sup>255</sup> This may be contrasted with the "deedly slepinge soun" heard in Morpheus' cave (162).

<sup>256</sup> Richard Almond, *Medieval Hunting* (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2003), pp. 34-5; 154-5.

<sup>257</sup> William Twiti, *The Middle English Text of The Art of Hunting*, ed. David Scott-Macnab, *Middle English Texts* 40 (Heidelberg: Winter, 2009), p. 48. The calls are rendered phonetically in Twiti's treatise. See especially in this edition MS A, ll. 59-69 onward.

sounds accompanying the horn—the barking of dogs and the shouting of hunters—are strictly amusical and cacophonous, rendering the passage a striking counterpoint to the birdsong. The proximity of the chamber and hunting scene from a sonic perspective may be interpreted in terms of Boethius’ definitions of consonance, “a mixture of high and low sound falling pleasantly and uniformly on the ears” [“acuti soni gravisque mixtura suaviter uniformiterque auribus accidens”], and dissonance, “a harsh and unpleasant percussion of two sounds coming to the ear intermingled [...] unwilling to blend together and each somehow striv[ing] to be heard unimpaired” [“duorum sonorum sibimet permixtorum ad aurem veniens aspera atque iniucunda percussio Nam dum sibimet misceri nolunt et quodammodo integer uterque nititur pervenire”] (*De musica* I.8). The dissonance between courtly human and natural activity is juxtaposed through the song of the birds and the sound of the hunting horn. While the birds are musical virtuosos, individually “peyned / To fynde out mery crafty notes / [and] spared not her throtes” (318-20), the maister-hunte attempts “t’assay hys horn [...] for to knowe / Whether hyt were clere or hors of soun” (346-7). It is dynamic, ethereal, and artistically performed. The horn’s capabilities are artless: it either issues a sound or fails to do so, and its communicative capacity is limited to a manmade system of rhythmic stresses. The birdsong’s encouragement of the divine gifts of love, generation, and regeneration is darkly contradicted by the effect of the horn’s sound, imbued with the human intention of curtailing life. While birdsong appears to nourish the heart, humans hunt the *hart*, but neither the heart nor the hart are found in these two episodes.

In addition to such comparisons between mortal and natural, the horn is crucially used to deconstruct processes of aural perception and signification, introducing a sense of epistemological uncertainty based on sound that will colour the remainder of the tale. Although humanity is often destructive and dissonant, the dreamer’s continual searching even when the hart escapes suggests the hope of finding some kind of truth elsewhere. As noted in the previous chapter, in *City of God*, Augustine states that the inner ear may be able to hear, in spite of the dissonance of the city of man,

the eternal music of the heavenly city (XIX.13). Furthermore, *BD*'s series of narrative tableaux gradually helps the dreamer come to terms with reality even as his experience is filtered through different aesthetic veils. While the birdsong expresses the higher reality of love, the sound of the horn also creates a sense of objective reality. In his study of musical instruments and music-making in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century painting, Leppert outlines four premises regarding the significance of sound in phenomenological terms. Sounds help construct human identity and locate one within social and cultural environments, sounds made or manipulated by humans carry a "semantic and discursive charge", all sounds "can be read or interpreted," and, crucially, "[s]ounds are a means by which people account for their versions of reality: as it was, is, or might be."<sup>258</sup> The dreamer interprets the horn according to its association with hunting. Before he hears or sees anything beyond the chamber, the sounds conjure vivid images of the hunt in the dreamer's mind. The prevalence of sound is conveyed through the repetition of "herde" and a focus on the sound's clarity:

And as I lay thus, wonder loude  
 Me thoughte I herde an hunte blowe  
 T'assaye his horn and for to knowe  
 Whether it were clere or hors of soune.  
 And I herd goinge, both up and doune,  
 Men, hors, houndes, and other thinge,  
 and al men speke of huntinge [...] (344-350)

The inclusion of terms related to understanding such as "wonder", "thoughte", and "knowe" underscore the cognitive and epistemological aspect of the passage. Though the hunt has not yet been seen, the sounds, interpreted by the dreamer in terms of their culturally defined meanings, construct an imagined reality. The external existence of ideas formed by aural impressions is solidified by the dreamer's immediate reaction to join the hunt upon his own horse (354-7). We thus see sound as a crucial source of knowledge and thought, visibly influencing the dreamer's will and actions. (As argued

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<sup>258</sup> Leppert, *The Sight of Sound*, p. 15; Cf. Travis, p. 205.



in the next section, *HF* may be viewed as drawing this structure to a symbolic extreme by describing utterances as physical, sentient beings.)

As the hunt progresses, it becomes evident that the human power to apply a semantic “charge” to sounds does not necessarily allow one to shape reality. This is perhaps foreshadowed by the curious detail of the presumably skilled master huntsman’s need to “assaye” his horn. Chaucer uses “assaye” to mean “test”, perhaps in addition to its definition as a call marking the initial search which begins the hunt.<sup>259</sup> There appears to be a pun on “assaien”, to essay, “assailen” to assail, and “aseyne” the technical term for “a search made for the scent or tracks of a quarry,” as all of these senses are implicit in the passage.<sup>260</sup> This subtle questioning of the confidence which humans assume in their communicative—and specifically sonic—control over the external world colours *BD*’s use of aural symbols to express the limitations of human action, particularly in relation to loss. This theme continues even as Chaucer’s inclusion of other horn calls, all defined in contemporary hunting manuals such as William Twiti’s early-fourteenth century Middle English *Art of Hunting*, confirms the relationship between meaningful sound and the actions of the hunt, but ultimately fail to find the symbolic hart. Terms such as the “thre mote” of the “uncoupylynge” of the hounds (375-6), the “forleygne” or recall (386), and the phrase to “strake forth” near the end of the poem (1312) lend confidence in human constructions of meaning, which are by extension intended to control nature.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> Quinn, ‘Medieval Dream Visions’, p. 330.

<sup>260</sup> See ‘assaien, v.’, and ‘assail(l)en, v.’, *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. Robert E. Lewis, et al. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1952-2001; online edition in *Middle English Compendium*, ed. Frances McSparran, et al. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Library, 2000-2018) <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu>> [accessed 23 February 2019]; “aseyne, asigne, assygne[.] n.’ a search made for the scent or tracks of a quarry”, Twiti, p. 100.

<sup>261</sup> The possible sources of Chaucer’s hunting terminology were first suggested by Oliver Farrar Emerson, ‘Chaucer and Medieval Hunting’, *Romantic Review*, 13 (1922), 115-50; repr. in *Chaucer Essays and Studies: A Selection from the Writings of Oliver Farrar Emerson, 1860-1927* (Cleveland, OH: Western Reserve University Press, 1970). For criticism of Emerson’s work, see Scott-Macnab, below.

As Scott-Macnab argues, such terminological details “[do] not guarantee clarity in any absolute sense.”<sup>262</sup> He continues,

When the Narrator walks from his tree we know only one thing with certainty, which is that the hart has escaped. [...] The narrator describes the hunt clearly and precisely, but there is a limit to what he can know from his position for he is not here granted the sort of percipience that later allows him to be able to reveal exactly the physiological dangers of the Man in Blak’s condition (490-9).<sup>263</sup>

The sense of objectivity implied by auditory phenomena and their attached names and significations leads the audience onto a false trail, a diffusion similar to the hounds’ overshooting of the hart (383).

The remainder of the dream provides an alternative to accepted notions of understanding, instead using French lyric narrative as a musical parallel to the problem with sound established in the hunting section. Travis argues that “noise thrives outside the pleasing paradigms of human discourse [and] parodies our models of comprehension [yet] remains integral to our world and to our selves”, and that “Chaucer is persuaded that the confusion of noise must be respected and somehow interpreted “on its own terms.”<sup>264</sup> *BD*’s themes of coming to terms with inexpressible loss and the construction of a new poetics appropriate to such feeling, and to a new English poetic tradition, are parallel. The hunt and the conversation with the knight present sound (representative of semantics) and music (as lyrical aesthetics) as facets of poetic expression that must be reconsidered in order to transcend the old forms and get to the heart (or hart) of the matter, by coming to terms with loss. Chaucer plays on the “hert/heart” pun, implicitly relating the dreamer’s exchange with the knight and the dream’s preceding sections. The knight claims, “She was lady / Of the body; she had the herte, / And who hath that may not asterte” (1152-4) and later states, “Our hertes weren so even a paire” (1289). This suggests parallels between the dreamer’s lovesickness and his absent “phisicien but oon” (39), the futile hart hunt, and the knight’s own expression of grief that their hearts may never again

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<sup>262</sup> David Scott-Macnab, ‘A Re-examination of Octovyen’s Hunt in *The Book of the Duchess*’, *Medium Aevum*, 56/2 (1987), 183-199 (p. 184).

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>264</sup> Travis, 204.

align. Quinn notes that the pun on hart “serves as a miniature metaphor for the elusiveness of the text as a whole,” the hunt exemplifying a “deliberate, yet frustrated quest.”<sup>265</sup> The dreamer’s insomnia and the Black Knight’s mourning may also be read as frustrated quests. Both figures are paralysed by their grief and also their methods of coming to terms with it, through personal and poetic *entendement*, as I will later discuss. Kiser identifies a strong dichotomy between inertia, or inaction, in the dreamer’s “ydel thought” (4) and lack of “besynesse” (the knight later makes describes making himself “besy” to serve his love (1265)) at the beginning of the dream: dreaming is connected to writing, and “is paradoxically where poets can be busiest.”<sup>266</sup> So far, the hunt has proven a temporary remedy for idleness, though the many sounds and significations fall short of their bearing on reality. The achievement of these goals is suspended, for the hunt is incapable of following the hart, which retraces its steps and escapes by “a privy wey” (382), while later, the knight’s lyric narrative avoids confirming the reality of his loss.

But before the dreamer meets the knight, he enters another scene removed from the sounds of civilisation. The dreamer’s departure from the hunt is signalled by the horn, which operates as a transitional symbol throughout the rest of the text. The “forloyn” (386) is blown to recall the hounds and the dreamer meanders from the activity of the hunt and symbolically from the courtly narrative, following a whelp to a *locus amoenus* with a natural abundance of flora and fauna. Chaucer recontextualises the dog held by the grieving woman in Machaut’s *Jugement dou Roy de Bebaingne* as the new setting conforms to the birds’ evocation of *musica mundana* earlier.<sup>267</sup> In Machaut’s tale, a small dog held by a lady grieving for her love runs barking to Guillaume, revealing that he has overheard her sad story (*Bebaingne*, 1204-15). The lady confesses the reason for her sadness to a jilted knight.

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<sup>265</sup> Quinn, ‘Medieval Dream Visions’ pp. 330-1.

<sup>266</sup> Lisa J. Kiser, ‘Sleep, Dreams and Poetry in Chaucer’s *Book of the Duchess*’, in *Essays on Chaucer’s Troilus and Criseyde and his Major Early Poems*, ed. C. David Benson (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991), 193-201 (pp. 194-5).

<sup>267</sup> See Windeatt, *Sources and Analogues*. Also see Wilcockson, ‘Explanatory Notes’ to *BD*, ll. 389-96, pp. 969-70 for more background on the whelp.

Each believes him or herself to have the greater sorrow and they present their cases to the king, who chooses the knight. Instead of following the courtly love *débat* formula, Chaucer borrows more from Machaut's *Dit dou lyon*, in which the eponymous beast approaches the lovesick narrator "as meekly as if he were a little puppy" and affectionately joins its ears (*Lyon* 331; *BD* 388-97). The lion leads the narrator through a treacherous wood populated with hostile creatures, into a beautiful meadow and garden (*Lyon* 433-52), wherein the lion's mistress resides (453-545).<sup>268</sup> Machaut's narrator strokes the lion, but the whelp flees when the dreamer of *BD* approaches.

This juxtaposition of disorderly and orderly landscapes is in some ways comparable to *BD*. Quinn argues that the whelp is a "puka-like (if not psychopomp-like)" figure "[whose escape] from Chaucer's grasp parallels Octavian's failure to catch the hart".<sup>269</sup> Chaucer's whelp, unlike the mature dogs that follow the horn's recall, may be read as a *de facto* dream guide that emblematises innocence, and then leads the dreamer to a scene of *harmonia mundi*. Whereas the sonic elements of the dream have evoked audible natural harmony through birdsong and artificial or instrumental dissonance, the forest scene appears to reveal a purer kind of music—number—as part of natural beauty and perfection. The vast trees are evenly spaced and perfectly formed (compare *Lyon* 189-96), evenly shading the earth and providing sanctuary for harts and other animals (*BD* 419-26). The mathematician Argus is also mentioned (436-42). Rather than the many-eyed god of classical mythology, this reference appears to be a corruption of "Algus", mentioned in *RR* 12760.<sup>270</sup> It should be noted, however, that this path ultimately leads to the knight, whose mourning, resembling the dreamer's own inner dissonance, contrasts with the surrounding harmony of the forest. Furthermore, it is a state of perfection that, like the hart and the whelp, is beyond the dreamer's reach.

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<sup>268</sup> Windeatt's translation, *Sources and Analogues*, 65-70 (p. 67).

<sup>269</sup> Quinn, 'Medieval Dream Visions', pp. 330-1

<sup>270</sup> Noted by Lynch in *The Book of the Duchess*, in *Dream Visions and Other Poems*, ed. Kathryn L. Lynch (New York and London: Norton, 2007), 3-37 (p. 16).

The narrative transitions again when the dreamer sees and overhears the lamentations of the Black Knight, sounds which attract the dreamer to draw closer, and transport the reader into the world of the French narrative *dit* and the lyric *complaint*. Gross names the French *complaint* as Chaucer's preferred lyric genre, for he uses it numerous times and in varied forms, all discussing "unrequited or disappointed love" from a first-person perspective.<sup>271</sup> As Gross writes, Chaucer takes advantage of the complaint's lack of fixed form, presenting it as "a ballade, like *The Complaint of Venus*, a straightforward lyric (*A Complaint to His Lady*), or a lyric introduced by a narrative (*The Complaint unto Pity*, *The Complaint of Mars*) or interpolated into a longer narrative, like the complaints of Troilus, and, as seems to have been the intention, the complaint in *Anelida*."<sup>272</sup> Apart from the explicit naming of the song as a "complaynte" (487), there is little in it which corresponds to the prescribed form. Most striking is the song's lack of musicality, for it is described as "a lay, a maner song / Withoute note, withoute song" (471-2). The absence of a melody may be linked to the French preference for texts separated from notated music (as discussed in the previous chapter), though the recognisable rhythms of the *formes fixes* meant they remained, to an extent, inherently musical.

More convincing is a reading of tunelessness as the opposite of music, which signifies harmony, love, vigor, and renewal. The knight is visually and musically discordant with the earthly paradise that surrounds him which is full of colour and motion—he is clothed entirely in black and sits beneath an oak while the dreamer "stalked even unto hys bak" (458)—and the harmony of nature is expressed numerically rather than melodically. As Quinn argues, "the knight's grief defies natural moderation."<sup>273</sup> A series of antitheses expressing the inversion of the knight's previously ideal life begins: "My song is turned to pleyning, / And al my laughter to weping" (599-600). Underlying these polarities of emotion is the silence of the deceased along with the emotional confusion associated with

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<sup>271</sup> Laila Z. Gross, 'Introduction to The Short Poems', *Riverside*, 631-7 (p. 632).

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>273</sup> Quinn, 'Medieval Dream Visions', p. 331.

traumatic experiences. This parallels the dreamer's own state of inertia and numbness, wherein "Al is yliche good to me" (9).

Amusicality and silence recur within the knight's story as well. He relates his youthful pastime of composing songs and singing them "loude" (1158). He alludes to Pythagoras' discovery of music and Tubal's invention of composition (1160-70). Initially, the knight had composed songs and "song hem loude", although he "ne knew the art" as well as the Greeks (1157-8, 1161vv), to keep him "fro ydelnesse" (1155) and to express "my felynge, myn herte to glade" (1172). Although the Greek idea of music reads as distant and unattainable, the knight once rejoiced in the expression of *sentement*, an emotional rather than rational truth. An additional allusion to Pythagoras (667) characterises him as a skilled gamesman (as opposed to the knight's losing chess match with Fortune), stressing the themes of measure and logic, and avoiding the potentiality of an emotional counterpart by eschewing reference to music altogether. Strikingly, the knight's defeat by Fortune (659) also takes away his music and his joy. Unrequited love has silenced the knight before: the first song he performs to White is a "tale" told "with sorwe" (1199-200) with "many a word [...] overskipte" (1208) before the song is at last reduced to a single plea: "I seyde 'mercy,' and no more" (1219). The knight focuses more on the French valuation of music's emotional content, perhaps remembering his song as conveying a state of emotional discord and dissonance so great that the song itself was effaced.

It is possible to discern harmony in apparent discord, and it is symbolically expressed in the knight's tale of love. The "dedly sorwful soun" (462) of the knight's voice successfully arouses the dreamer's *pitee* so that he encourages the knight to tell more (465). The song makes the love story and the knight's grief audible, palpable, and affective, even if it does not adhere to extant models. It is possible that the knight's words have a deeper resonance than *musica instrumentalis*, their power residing in the portrayal of two souls intertwined in true love as *musica humana*, and thus closer to *musica mundana*. This may be linked to Augustine's discussion of *discordia concors* (*City of God* XIX.13) and the

ability of the inner ear to hear harmony underlying multiplicity and dissonance.<sup>274</sup> (This point will be picked up again in relation to *PF*.) The challenge for the dreamer and the knight in *BD*, as for Boethius in the *Consolation*, seems to be one of becoming attuned to the concord that underlies and persists even in discord. The implied solution at the end of *BD*, for the narrator at least, is to convey the experience properly, thereby finding acceptance through a kind of emotional truth expressed in writing.

The knight's inability to overcome his discordant emotional state is rooted in the lyrical embodiment of his grief. Bouton distinguishes between a narrative, which is "an account of a series of past events usually, but not always, told in the first person", and a lyric, which "speaks directly and in the present tense."<sup>275</sup> The knight's song relates the story of the love affair as vividly as if it were in the present, though the dreamer's repeated questioning (perhaps unwittingly) threatens to force an acknowledgement of the events as belonging to the past. Lyrics concentrate "on a single moment" and are "atemporal and static" with individual stanzas juxtaposed, in contrast to narrative, which tends to present events in a chronological (or non-chronological) series aiming toward a conclusion.<sup>276</sup> Wimsatt views *BD*'s narrative as secondary to the lyrical elements of the poem, which is "primarily an elegiac meditation on human loss rather than a story of the narrator's experience."<sup>277</sup> As such, the lyric cannot reach its obvious conclusion, instead leaving memories and feelings from the love affair in temporal suspension.

The dreamer, in engaging with the knight offers the necessary counterpoint to advance the lyric. The performance of the complaint externalises the emotional experience, though it still fails to apprehend directly the finality of death. The true source of the knight's sorrow is unclear from the

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<sup>274</sup> Spitzer, *World Harmony*, p. 40 (Discussed in Travis, p. 204).

<sup>275</sup> Boulton, p. 3.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> Wimsatt, *French Contemporaries*, p. 126.

song itself, at least for the dreamer. His repeated exchange with the knight resembles a musical refrain, albeit one which counterintuitively suggests the limitations of traditional music. A refrain is typically defined as “a phrase or verse occurring at intervals, especially at the end of each stanza of a poem or song.”<sup>278</sup> She adds that refrains are flexible tools which can consist of text, melody, or a combination of the two and can be shared across separate works, and can also be used to identify or distinguish different types of songs.<sup>279</sup> Regarding the mass popularity of refrains in the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries, she continues, “some two thousand refrain texts and around five hundred melodies have been collected [...] from widely diverse genres and contexts.”<sup>280</sup>

The dreamer’s refrain occurs three times (742-4, 1137-8, 1305-6), with the apparent intention of encouraging the knight to win his lady back. Each time, the knight adds to the refrain by replying, “Thou wost ful litel what thou menest; / I have lost more than thou wenest,” (743-4) followed by a variation on the dreamer’s simpleminded question, “Loo, [sey] how that may be?” (745) and then a continuation of the knight’s tale. The discrepancy between the social standing of the two figures implicit in the pronouns “I” and “thou” suggests the symbolic dissonance between the dreamer’s personal grief and the dreamed knight as an externalised mouthpiece from which he can elevate his feeling in terms of courtly love and lyric. The two emotionally aligned characters are mutually reflective despite their different social statuses. The refrain, a product of both characters, implicates them both as part of the lyric “I” that ultimately arrives at both a personal and universal *sentement* and *entendement* regarding true love and loss.

The *Behaingne* has been recognised as containing a self-conscious reflexivity about the poet’s relationship to literary tradition.<sup>281</sup> Therefore, Chaucer’s use of the theme is not new, however, the

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<sup>278</sup> Butterfield, *Poetry and Music*, p. 5.

<sup>279</sup> Butterfield, *Poetry and Music*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> R. Barton Palmer, ‘Introduction’ to Guillaume de Machaut, *Judgment of the King of Bohemia (Jugement dou Roy de Behaingne)*, ed. and trans. R. Barton Palmer, Garland Library of Medieval Literature, 9, ser. A (New York: Garland, 1984), xiii-xli (pp. xxvi-xxvii).



Black Knight's complaint uses elements of French lyric but also calls for a re-evaluation of the traditional discourse of *sentement* and *entendement*. Machaut's *Prologue* touches on "the interplay between the discourses of the self and of tradition" deemed by Poirion the "ambiguous I" throughout Machaut's *oeuvre*.<sup>282</sup> The "I" was used not only to create emotional immediacy (particularly where there is a distinction between the poet and a persona which may be intended to represent a patron), but to highlight the "self-consciousness about the poet's working relationship to the structuring principles of literary tradition."<sup>283</sup> *Bebaingne* contains a cipher of Machaut's name in the final line, underscoring the importance of poetic identity in this poem especially.<sup>284</sup> *BD* concludes with the poet-dreamer's resolution to write the dream in verse, echoing Machaut's conclusion, but also making the text representative of Chaucer's new poetic within the English tradition.

The parallel narratives of loss across different scenes and characters result in a blurring of the subjective origin of each persona. Horowitz, in her reading of *BD*, adopts Glenn Burger's definition of the poetic "I", which is "a special signifier whose referent [...] modulates [...] with the conditions (speaker, code, audience) of its enunciation."<sup>285</sup> This rapid shifting between speakers results in what Johnson calls a "melding" of the two characters.<sup>286</sup> The hunt, the knight's grief, and the dreamer's creative inertia are united under the recurring theme of searching for that which is beyond one's grasp. This is echoed in the possible pun on "mene" in the refrain. The verb derives from the Anglo-Norman "mener" ("to lead, take, carry out, answer"), while "mence" refers to the "blast [or action of blasting] of a hunting horn," possibly to summon hounds, which may be relevant given Chaucer's earlier use

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<sup>282</sup> Palmer, 'Introduction' to *JKB*, p. xxii.

<sup>283</sup> Palmer, 'Introduction' to *JKB*, pp. xxvi-ii.

<sup>284</sup> Machaut, *Jugement dou Roy de Bebaingne*, in *Œuvres*, ed. Ernest Hoepffner, SATF, 3 vols (Paris: 1908-21), I, 57-135.

<sup>285</sup> Horowitz, p. 261; Cf. Glenn Burger, 'Reading Otherwise: Recovering the Subject in *The Book of the Duchess*', *Exemplaria*, 5 (1993), 325-41, (p. 330).

<sup>286</sup> William C. Johnson, Jr, 'Art as Discovery: The Aesthetics of Consolation in Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*', *South Atlantic Bulletin* 40/2 (1975), 53-62 (p. 59).

of hunting terms in the poem.<sup>287</sup> These meanings carry on into Middle English, the nominal form possessing a variety of senses: a course of action, method; an intermediary or negotiator; an intermediate state<sup>288</sup> or “the cry of the hound when he finds the track of the game”; “the signal sounded on the horn when returning from the hunt”.<sup>289</sup> The states of Octavian, the knight, and the dreamer are expressed in the use of the semantically flexible term, “menest” in the repetition of, “thou nost ful litel what thou menest.” The dreamer’s apparent ignorance of the lady’s death is universalised according to the widening of perspectives to the point that “mene” not only signifies meaning, but actions involved in the production or pursuit of meaning. The refrain does not merely force the knight into admission of the truth; rather, the combined perspectives of the narrative strive to find a way to articulate that truth.

The knight’s answer is a jarring departure from the lyricism employed to describe the living White. This is manifest in the disrupted meter which concludes the complaint:

“She is deed.” “Nay!” “Yes, by my trouthe.”  
 “Is that your los? By God, it is routhe.” (1309-10)

It is “with that worde, ryght anoon” (1311) that the recall is blown and the hunters immediately “gan to strake forth” (1312), blending the audible elements of parallel narratives into the rhyme of “trouthe/routhe”, confirming the painful reality of White’s death and concluding the quest. Closure across the parallel narratives is brought about by this sudden stylistic break. Another sonic overlapping of narratives soon follows: the sound of the castle bell striking twelve transcends the dream’s space as it wakes the narrator (1322-25). This fluidity of sounds and significations seems to promise a fresh start. The castle’s “walles whyte” (1318) seem to be juxtaposed with the implied book in which the new “rhyme” will be written (1332). Johnson argues that the rational treatment of death embraces the

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<sup>287</sup> ‘mener, v.a. (1)’, *Anglo-Norman Dictionary (AND2) Online edition* <[http://www.anglo-norman.net/D/mener\[1\]](http://www.anglo-norman.net/D/mener[1])> accessed 22 February 2019; ‘mence, s. (1)’, *AND2 Online edition* <[http://www.anglo-norman.net/D/mence\[1\]](http://www.anglo-norman.net/D/mence[1])> [accessed 22 February 2019].

<sup>288</sup> ‘mēne, n. (3)’, *Middle English Dictionary* [accessed 22 February 2019].

<sup>289</sup> ‘mēne, n. (4)’, *Middle English Dictionary* [accessed 22 February 2019].

poem's journey of discovery to position the old, represented by the "prosaic, literal-minded, doctrinaire Dreamer", against "the sensitive, suffering, new hero of love, the Knight," and that the combination of both figures results in grief being "sublimated through aesthetic discovery."<sup>290</sup> It is perhaps more relevant to Chaucer's abbreviation of the knight's lyric to view both characters as initially confined to imaginative chambers formed by "olde bokes", to adopt a phrase used in *PF* (25). The poet's straightforward remark about the book containing the story of Seys and Alcyone, "I fond it in myn honde ful even" (1329), appears to suggest a metaphorical mastery and transformation of the tale's emotional truth, which, according to what we have learned from the knight's complaint, posits real emotional experience and lyric expression as intertwined. The shift to the conclusion of the hunt implies a relationship between a release from the pursuit of the hart and liberation from a lyric style in order to allow for the creation of something new.

As a result, the dreamer and the other parallel personas have learned to "mene" in multiple senses—to articulate, or to "sound" the discordant concord of human life and regain one's inner harmony through a new lyricism. The premises of amusical signification and conventional lyrical expression are sounded out through the dream's juxtaposed literary landscapes and soundscapes, but also identified as wanting. Various courses of action are taken throughout the dream in relation to the pervading sense of loss, ultimately leading to the dreamer's participation in the knight's complaint via formal and theoretical aspects of French lyric. On an aesthetic level, the poem as a whole comments on the relationship between *musica instrumentalis* (as well as any manmade sound or other art), the dissonance and consonance of human activity and *musica humana* (whether exemplified as grieving, hunting, or writing), and the transcendent *musica mundana*. The overarching matter framing the dream is the poet's acquisition of a fresh writing style that does justice to poetic and personal truth.

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<sup>290</sup> Johnson, pp. 53, 60.



*Sound as Representation in The House of Fame*

*HF* defines and explores sound, primarily in terms of human speech, in terms analogous to philosophical allegory rather than lyric or the literature of courtly love, as seen in *BD*. It is also more overtly focused on the processes involved in composition, understanding, literary authority, and the dissemination of literature as a perverse judgment of sentient and visible utterances by the volatile and irrational Lady Fame. Chaucer draws upon ancient and contemporary natural philosophy in order to create a new vision of *discordia concors* in his allegory of human signification, and *HF*, in its unfinished state, appears to acknowledge Geoffrey the poet-dreamer's anxieties about poetic authority and truth as subject to the caprices of literary interpretation and misinterpretation, repetition and forgetting, that are displayed in the dream. *HF* survives in three authoritative manuscripts, Fairfax 16, Bodley 638, and Pepys 2006, and the edition of Caxton (1483) and Thynne (1532).<sup>291</sup> Its estimated date of composition is 1378-1380, around the time when Chaucer composed various lyrics, including "The Complaint unto Pity" and "Complaint to His Lady", and *Anelida and Arcite*.<sup>292</sup> The narrative follows the dream of the poet-dreamer Geoffrey, which begins in a temple dedicated to Venus, followed by a journey through the spheres in the claws of a giant, speaking golden eagle, who brings him to the House of Fame, where he observes the eponymous figure enact judgments upon the fate of personified utterances, and to the House of Rumour, and the vision breaks off mid-line with the entrance of a supposed "man of gret auctorite" (2158). The text is divided by Dantean invocations in which the poet prays for the ability to tell his dream accurately.

*HF* has generated much critical debate, most concerning its central theme or themes to provide a sense of continuity within the poem. While the thematic approach has brilliantly illuminated many areas of the poem, as Minnis writes,

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<sup>291</sup> John M. Fyler, 'Textual Notes' to *HF*, *Riverside*, 1139-43 (p. 1139).

<sup>292</sup> Benson, 'Canon and Chronology', p. xxv.

[M]ore than any other work of Chaucer, the irreducibly ‘polysemantic’ *HF* stubbornly resists such enforced closure. The same could even be said of the attempt to locate the thematic centre of the poem in the very absence of fixity—as with the specifications of pluralism, diversity, literary scepticism, or the ‘labyrinthine aesthetic’ as the controlling principle.<sup>293</sup>

In light of this comment, *HF* will be considered in terms of the relationship between the scientific and social discourses and contexts of sound, while maintaining the inherent openness of the poem itself. The use of sound as a symbol for oral and textual communication is central to this complex text, and includes the Eagle’s discussion of contemporary theories of the physics of sound as much as a vivid illustration of these laws in the sublunar environs of Fame and Rumour. This approach builds upon and challenges Gabrovsky’s claim that, in *HF*, “the realm of poetic imagination does not necessarily conflict with scientific law.”<sup>294</sup> While *HF* is a highly intellectual text incorporating recent scientific theories of sound, it is also a dream vision, and often a wryly ironic one that is highly sceptical of human perception and authority. Gabrovsky also distinguishes between reality and perception with reference to the use of terms such as “thought” and “semed” at moments when Geoffrey witnesses marvellous events that appear to contradict contemporary philosophical views.<sup>295</sup> There are also many facets of the dream that confound science, such as the personified tidings or the speaking Eagle, that, if we are to trust the text at all, are not easily explained as perceptual error. Geoffrey merely reports what he sees, hears, and thinks, to the best of his ability, as he states in the invocations (78-9, 525-7, 1101-3).

The tone of the poem must therefore be balanced against the text’s purported sources of scientific and literary authority. The surety with which the Eagle explains the movement of sound to Fame (729-852) on one hand, contrasts with what we later learn about the ‘law’ of Fame, which, like

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<sup>293</sup> A. J. Minnis, V. J. Scattergood, and J. J. Smith, *Oxford Guides to Chaucer: The Shorter Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), p. 219.

<sup>294</sup> Alexander N. Gabrovsky, *Chaucer the Alchemist: Physics, Mutability, and the Medieval Imagination* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2015), p. 49.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*

Fortune, appears to promise only consistent unpredictability in relaying sound. Generically speaking, *HF* resembles earlier philosophical allegories and particularly those containing an apotheosis, such as Alan of Lille's *Anticlaudianus*. Indeed, the "Anteclaudian" (986) is mentioned along with "Boece" and "Marcian" (972; 985), whose seminal works concern visions of, or encounters with, the divine. Furthermore, Geoffrey's dream guide, the golden eagle, is modelled upon the golden eagle that takes Dante to Purgatory in a dream in *The Divine Comedy* (*Purgatorio* 9.19-33). The dream flight in *HF* is in many ways a comic parody of these analogues, especially as Fronesis in the *Anticlaudianus* ventures beyond the sphere of Signifier and into the highest sphere (V.246-55), whereas Geoffrey is brought back to Earth after his flight in order to explore Fame's house, which is in the sublunary sphere, at the midpoint between "[h]even, erthe, and eke the see" (846).<sup>296</sup> Even so, the places Geoffrey visits, from the Temple of Venus to Fame and Rumour, are made accessible in the dream, and the latter upon the Eagle's wings. It is therefore reasonable to read the dream landscape as an intermediate zone between mortal and divine worlds as well. Universal laws, such as the movement of sound, which can be explained logically, exist alongside discord, which tends to function irrationally, and it is discord, rather than reason, which may be said to characterise human life. Man's disorder is a theme of both *DPN* and the *Consolation*, and in these works, divine aid helps mankind recover his harmony.

*HF* is distinct from earlier philosophical allegories in presenting discord in a specifically human context, i.e., speech, and denying a recovery of harmony. Writing is portrayed as orally delivered and aurally perceived. This idea goes beyond the usual practice of reading aloud, addressing contemporary theories of the foundations of communication itself. Boitani identifies the origin of narrative as a major theme in Chaucer's description of the House of Rumour: "the raw material of tales" "is basically

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<sup>296</sup> See Powrie, 'Alan of Lille's *Anticlaudianus* as Intertext in Chaucer's *House of Fame*', *The Chaucer Review*, 44/3 (2010), 246-267.

oral and has its roots in reports, rumors, chatter.”<sup>297</sup> Irvine connects this to Chaucer’s literary sources as well as the contemporary intellectual climate: Ovid’s account in *Fama* in *Metamorphoses* 12 of spoken utterances “is given a literary significance” that is expressed in terms of medieval grammatical theory.<sup>298</sup> The definition of *vox* perpetuated in commentaries and encyclopedias and taught in medieval universities was based primarily on part of Priscian’s *Institutiones grammaticae* entitled *De voce*, which defines *vox* as “spoken utterance”, the foundation of all communication.<sup>299</sup> *Vox* can be divided into four species: articulate (“articulata”), nonarticulate (“inarticulata”), resolvable into discrete units (“litterata”), and not resolvable into discrete units (“illiterata”).<sup>300</sup> In the ninth century, Remigius of Auxerre wrote that “*vox* is the material or beginning of music, and it exercises the same power in music as the point in geometry, the monad in arithmetic, the letter in grammar”.<sup>301</sup> This coheres with Augustine’s definition of music as “scientia bene modulandi”, focusing on metrics rather than pure sound (*De musica* II.ii). Chaucer would have been directly familiar with the *artes grammaticae*, which borrow scientific material from other sources, and these basic grammatical ideas undoubtedly underpin the Eagle’s discussion of sound and *HF*’s approach to meaningful and non-meaningful noise overall. Cartlidge also argues that Holcot’s *Wisdom* commentaries are the vehicle by which Aristotelian and other contemporary scientific thought, and particularly the analogy of ripples formed by a stone cast into water, likely reached Chaucer.<sup>302</sup>

All forms of communication are encompassed by sound, for as the Eagle states,

[...] every soun mot to hyt pace;  
Or what so cometh from any tonge,  
Be hyt rounded, red, or songe (720-2)

<sup>297</sup> Piero Boitani, ‘Chaucer’s Labyrinth: Fourteenth-Century Literature and Language’, in *Essays on Chaucer’s Troilus and Criseyde and his Major Early Poems*, ed. C. David Benson (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991), 210-30 (p. 221).

<sup>298</sup> Martin Irvine, ‘Medieval Grammatical Theory and Chaucer’s *House of Fame*’, *Speculum*, 60/4 (1985), 850-876 (p. 850).

<sup>299</sup> ‘vocem’, Priscian, *Institutiones grammaticae*, ed. Hertz, in H. Keil, *Grammatici Latini*, 8 vols (Leipzig, 1857-70), II, 5; translation by Irvine, pp. 854-5.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid. [“Voces autem differentiae sunt quattuor: articulata, inarticulata, literata, illiterata.”]

<sup>301</sup> Cited in Bent, ‘Grammar and Rhetoric’, p. 53. Bent translates Remigius of Auxerre, *Remigii Autissiodorensis commentum in Martianum Capellam*, ed. C. E. Lutz, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1965), II, 336, IX.499.14.

<sup>302</sup> Neil Cartlidge, ‘Ripples on the Water?: The Acoustics of Geoffrey Chaucer’s *House of Fame* and the Influence of Robert Holcot’, *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 39 (2017), 57-98.



The Eagle appears to condense or merge the categories of *vox* into a single physical phenomenon: “Thou wost wel this, that speche is soun”, and “Soun is nought but air y-broken” (762, 765).<sup>303</sup> Zieman makes an important point about how the use of different categories of sound in grammar and music in medieval theory relate to this conflation:

The reduction of *vox*, however, is not entirely the Eagle’s or Chaucer’s doing: the relation of *vox* to *sonus* resulted from the traditional comingling of grammatical theory and musical theory. The description of the movement of sounds to the House of Fame through “multiplicacioun” (782 ff.) made its way into grammatical commentaries from Boethius’s *De musica* as a way to discuss the corporeal nature of *vox*. For the Eagle, however, Boethius’s acoustical emphasis takes precedence over the grammatical concerns with the articulate, scriptible nature of *vox*. *Vox*, fundamentally, is anything that is heard.<sup>304</sup>

*HF* reflects the relationship between music and word in a few places, particularly through the trumpets “Sklaundre” and “Laude” (1625, 1673), and doubly in the first lines of the *Aeneid*—“I wol now synge, yif I kan” (142)—inscribed in brass, a material which recalls the aforementioned brass trumpets as well as Ovid’s description of Fame’s house as “built all of echoing brass” [“tota est ex aere sonanti”] (*Met.* 12.46).<sup>305</sup> The second part of this analysis addresses the presentation of oral narrative from the poet’s perspective, using the invocations to reflect on the act of composition in response to the events of the dream. Oral narrative, as illustrated in the Janus-like applications of brass in the above examples, is a double-edged sword. The poet begs for inspiration and guidance against misspeaking in the first invocation (66-110) but the actual Muses are depicted in the dream as devotees of Fame, performing songs in praise of her and thereby condoning the very instability that the poet aims to avoid (1395-1406). Human poetic endeavour is also integral to the literal and metaphorical architecture of Fame: minstrels decorate the external alcoves (1193-1200) and poets and historians are set upon pillars (however stable the materials) within (1420-1519).

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<sup>303</sup> Cf. Fyler, ‘Explanatory Notes’ to *HF*, *Riverside*, 977-90, ll. 765-81 for the scientific background of this axiom.

<sup>304</sup> Katherine Zieman, ‘Chaucer’s Voys’, *Representations*, 60 (1997), 70-91 (pp. 82-3).

<sup>305</sup> Latin with facing page translation taken from Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Frank Justus Miller, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), II.

The final point I would argue in relation to the use of sound in *HF* concerns the presentation of sound as a physical force that helps shape the human perception of reality. Medieval philosophers theorised the multiplication of sound as evidence of the corporeal nature of *vox*. Noise and speech in *HF* are explicitly connected to the human world—and an emphatically cacophonous one. The discord and mutability of human sound is emphasised and, strikingly, musical harmony, both *mundana* and *divina*, is absent from the text, as are Jove, who has sent the Eagle, and the man of authority. Instability is central to *HF*. *HF* outlines the scientific ‘law’ of sound and the ‘laws’ of communication—the transmission of words as semantically charged sounds—which have the potential for change, not only in the delivery of meaningful sounds but also in the meanings they contain. A demonstration of sound travelling as ripples in water, without any significant note on sonic distortion, thus becomes an allegory of the anxieties associated with human communication through sound, affecting accuracy, truth, and authority. Furthermore, this suggests certain implications for communicated knowledge as a large component of the perception and experience of reality. As Boitani argues, “[t]ransformed into oral narrative, [reality] is the daughter of Chance.”<sup>306</sup> By the final half-line of *HF* the extent to which chance affects oral communication is realized and displayed as a realistic and physical chaos, with human utterances clambering atop one another to glimpse the man who appears to Geoffrey only to be “of gret auctorite” (2188).

The presentation of sound as the substance of communication and narrative introduces two competing ideas of sound that will be tested in the remainder of the text. The Eagle’s definition of sound (its production and its motions) endows a degree of confidence in rational (or philosophical, or scientific) authority that is comparatively lacking in the rest of the poem, which by contrast focuses on poetic authority. There is apparent security in logic, expressed through axioms pertaining to laws of motion and place: the location of Fame and Fame as receptacle for all sound (714-24), the attraction

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<sup>306</sup> Cf. Boitani, p. 221.

of everything to its proper place (729-70), the definition of sound, including speech (761-81), the doctrines of multiplication and motion as concentric circles (782-822), and the application of these premises to the workings of Fame (823-852).<sup>307</sup> This structured reasoning reaches back to the philosophers. The idea that everything has a place (and by extension, that ideas metaphorically have their proper places both in terms of constructing a proof for sound and being able to link the premises to their original sources) is articulated in the following passage:

[...] every thing, by thys reson,  
Hath his proper mansion  
To which hit seketh to repaire,  
Ther-as hit shulde not apaire.  
Loo, this sentence ys knowen kouth  
Of every philosophres mouth,  
As Aristotle and daun Platon,  
And other clerkys many oon [...] (753-60)

The Eagle appears to take pride in the hope that his philosophical proof lacks any challenging philosophical terms or poetic or rhetorical flourishes, perhaps an implicit joke on the intellectual rigour of those who write and read philosophy. His proof, put simply, is

Withoute any subtilte  
Of speche, or gret prolixite  
Of termes of philosophie,  
Of figures of poetrie,  
Or colours of rethorike [...] (855-9)

This is, of course, comically ironic, since the entire passage makes use of these three: terms, figures, and colours, despite the Eagle's main point that he can explain profound truths in an unpretentious and accessible manner. Minnis considers the Eagle's speech "a masterpiece of rhetorical expression" and identifies a number of specific tropes: among these are *interrogatio*, *circuitio* or *paraphrasis*, and from lines 856-9, each of which begins with "Of", *repetitio*.<sup>308</sup> In hindsight, the beginning of these lines with the letter "O" resembles those later in the poem (1960-76) which suggest the many entrances to the House of Rumour. Perhaps the earlier repetition of letters hints at, or even pokes holes, in the Eagle's

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<sup>307</sup> Many have connected the Eagle's discussion to philosophical sources. See especially Gabrovsky and Cartlidge for thorough readings.

<sup>308</sup> Minnis, *Shorter Poems*, p. 174.

logical explication of what will turn out to be an irrational place, or it compounds the sense of drawing metaphorical circles around the unwitting dreamer with a crash course in natural philosophy. Alternatively, each of these allusions to what the Eagle claims is lacking in his argument generates even more essentially meaningless ripples that will travel to Fame. Indeed, the eagle has done all but mention the term *vox*, instead providing a word for word textbook explanation of it. Additionally, taking Cartlidge's argument about the Holcot source into consideration, the seemingly straightforward fact of Aristotle and Plato as the originators of these theories has itself been tacitly affected by the machinations of Fame, as is demonstrated by the absence of Holcot's name.<sup>309</sup>

The Eagle's concluding promise that Geoffrey will have "Of every word of thys sentence / A preve by experience" (877-8) raises some issues about perception of sound that ultimately feed into the arbitrary nature of Fame. The comment is deeply ironic in hindsight given the relatively chaotic and far-fetched 'proof' that is to follow. It also seems to deflate any claim natural philosophy may have to self-contained, *a priori* proofs. A proof by experience is, by contrast, *a posteriori*, but is given an equal if not superior value. Perception, then, of a specifically aural kind, is privileged. Geoffrey will "heren wel / Top and tayl and everydel / That every word that spoken ys / Cometh into Fames House" (879-82), a promise that is not entirely true. However, the proper understanding of sensory perceptions requires reason and imagination, both of which seem to be comically lacking in the obtuse dreamer. One may recall the Eagle's earlier adage,

Lo, is it nat a greet mischaunce,  
To lete a fool han governaunce  
Of thing that he can nat demeyne? (957-9)

There is no guarantee that the dreamer will benefit from his experience beyond the Eagle's and Jove's good intentions. Indeed, it reads as a jab at Geoffrey for his obtuse responses to the marvels he

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<sup>309</sup> Cartlidge, p. 77.

witnesses in the dream. He is also unobservant. When he approaches Fame's palace, he fails to notice the din that may be heard by anyone within a mile from the building (1038):

““Maistow nat heren that I do?”  
“What?” quod I.” “The grete soun” (1024-5)

He is far from able to distinguish “every word” (881), though this is through no fault of his own. The simultaneous sounding of utterances creates what the Eagle describes as a “grete soun [...] that rumbleth up and down” (1025-6). Geoffrey compares it to:

“Peter!—Beting of the see,”  
Quod I, “ageyn the roches holowe,  
Whan tempest doth the shippes swalowe,  
And lat a man stoned, out of doute,  
A myle thens, and here it route;  
Or ells lyk the last humbling  
After the clappe of o thundringe,  
Whan Joves hath the aire y-bete;  
But it doth me for fere swete.” (1043-42)

Violent natural imagery abounds as sounds are associated with physical destruction and generates a physiological reaction in Geoffrey, intimating the presence of something primal and more powerful than humankind. Extended descriptions of conglomerations of sounds elsewhere in the poem are associated with the violence of nature: shipwreck by storm, and in a later passage poetry is likened to noisy rooks' nests and bees fleeing a hive:

The halle was al ful, ywis,  
Of hem that written olde gastes  
As been on trees rokes nestes;  
But it a ful confus matere  
Were al the gastes for to here  
That they of write or how they hight.  
But whyl that I beheld this sight,  
I herde a noise aprochen blyve  
That ferde as been doon in an hyve,  
Ageyn hir tyme of out-fleyinge;  
Right swich a maner murmuring,  
For al the world, it semed me. (III.1514-25.)

The natural imagery is applied to the crowd of Fame's supplicants and tacitly related to the “ful confus matere” of the *auctores'* conflicting tales. The whirling of Rumour is like a trebuchet that can be heard from the river Oise to Rome:

And therout com so greet a noise,  
That, had it stoned upon Oise,  
Men might it han herd esely  
To Rome, I trowe sikerly.  
And the noise which that I herde  
For al the world right so it ferde  
As doth the routing of the stoon  
That from th'engyn is leten goon. (III.1927-34)

All of these images are of *vox articulata literata* transformed by excess and disorder into *vox inarticulata illiterata*, or nonsense. The final sounds of the poem are the “grete noise” of love tidings that are compounded with the clamour of other tidings proclaiming their curiosity while rushing around (2141-8). The trajectory of the symbolism throughout these passages begins with natural disaster (also alluding to the power of God over man), moving to nature defending itself—for bees only rush out together in order to protect the hive,<sup>310</sup> human warfare, and lastly, love surrounded by chaotic selfishness. The tidings that Geoffrey has heard so far are broadly characterised as cacophony; that is, speech equated with sound: a literal proof of the Eagle’s *reductio ad absurdum* that speech is sound and sound is broken air (762-6).

Other descriptions of sound lend a further dimension to the proof by experience: the bearing of auditory phenomena on reality, allegorised by the physical manifestation of tidings. The passage quoted above reveals how the mental significations of the noises Geoffrey hears are worrying enough to make him feel physically threatened. This implied feeling continues through various metaphors until the end of the poem, which is arguably the most objective account of the tidings because it lacks external comparison. The fear felt by the dreamer is not entirely misdirected, however. Tidings are portrayed as each taking on the physical “lyknesse” of their speaker as well as red or black colouring (1074-83), alluding, most likely, to manuscript rubrication.<sup>311</sup> Taylor connects this passage to John of Salisbury’s *Metalogicon* I.13, which describes writing as “shapes indicating voice” and letters as media

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<sup>310</sup> A possible reference to the feudal loyalty and community of bees in bestiaries.

<sup>311</sup> On the colours, see Karla Taylor, *Chaucer Reads “The Divine Comedy”* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), p. 34.

that “speak voicelessly the utterances of the absent”.<sup>312</sup> On this model, letters are the visual symbol of orally communicated ideas that help shape our understanding of reality. Ultimately, the text of *HF*, too, comprises a collection of meaningful sounds.

A useful parallel may also be drawn between the relationship between sound and reality in *HF* and contemporary natural philosophy.<sup>313</sup> As Vance indicates, “Augustine elects language as the empirical foundation for his physics of movements and time [and] considered verbal signals—*voces*—to be corporeal things, even though what they signify is not corporeal but mental.”<sup>314</sup> Gabrovsky also interprets the line describing creatures as “formed by Nature” (2039) as relating to philosophical forms.<sup>315</sup> The creation of matter from the Same and the Different is perhaps perversely applied to Fame and Rumour: tidings are drawn into the labyrinth where they become lost among true and false utterances before they proceed to Fame’s house (2088-2109). Fame further “informs” (to borrow Gabrovsky’s term) the tidings via the trumpets of “Laud” and “Sclaunder”, which generate not only sound but qualities palpable to the other senses, such as smoke and smell (1636-56, 1678-87).<sup>316</sup> This exposition of speech as form metaphorically suggests the very real bearing that words (ostensibly created from nothing) may have on reality.

On this basis, *HF* considers the moral implications of speech as a human creation, subject, like all things in the mortal sphere, to imperfection, transience, and decay. Fame’s judgment over utterances shows that the perception and interpretation of sound is as vital to its existence as its generation. Cartlidge argues that Holcot’s writings, in addition to granting Chaucer a repository of

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<sup>312</sup> Ibid. Cited by Phillips and Havelly in a note to *The House of Fame*, in *Chaucer’s Dream Poetry*, ed. Helen Phillips and Nick Havelly (London and New York: Longman, 1997), 126-218, ll. 1073-83; also see Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), pp. 212-7; 142-3.

<sup>313</sup> See Gabrovsky, p. 6 on Aristotelian theories of being and fourteenth-century theories of relative motion.

<sup>314</sup> Eugene Vance, ‘Saint Augustine: Language as Temporality’, in *Mimesis: From Mirror to Method, Augustine to Descartes*, ed. John D. Lyons and Stephen G. Nichols, Jr (Hanover, NH and London: University Press of New England, 1982), 20-35 (pp. 21-22). See Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, ed. R.P.H. Green (Oxford: OUP, 1996), 2.i.1: Augustine defines a sign as that which causes one to think beyond the immediate sensory perception of something.

<sup>315</sup> Gabrovsky, p. 8.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

applied natural philosophy, showed him “how perspectives on physics could be used to effect even in contexts that are otherwise predominantly moral or allegorical.”<sup>317</sup> Fame is capricious and uninhibited by morality. She has the power not only to multiply speech but to distort entirely its content. The sixth group of supplicants, a crowd of idlers, is granted Laud to falsify word about their noble deeds (1727-70), while the ninth group, comprised of wicked people, desire fame precisely for their sins, and they are happy to hear Sclaunder (1823-67). Though Geoffrey expresses his desire to avoid Fame’s judgment, he is a participant in the entire process, wittingly or unwittingly (cf. Geoffrey’s words to a “friend” (1873-82)). The poem’s opening exhortation, “God turne us every drem to goode!”, mentioned again towards the end of the proem (58), supports the claim that one has little control over the afterlife of speech.

The other noteworthy element relating to the use of sound in *HF* is craft of oral narrative, an overarching theme expressed most strongly in the invocations which divide and structure the dream narrative, and dramatise Geoffrey’s attempt to tell his dream in spite of the hindrances to communication vividly demonstrated to him in the dream. However, the very fact of his speaking (or writing) necessitates some judgment over the previous voices of authority, or tradition, whether the topic is science or poetry. Minstrels and poets are both integral to and contained within Fame’s castle. “[A]lle maner of mynstralles / And gestiours that tellen tales” occupy the niches of the pinnacles around the outside of Fame’s castle (1196-7), while famous harpers, pipers, and trumpeters abound inside (1200-1250). The Muses, led by Calliope, also perform heavenly songs in praise of Fame (1395-1406). Geoffrey also notes the conflicting narratives of the *auctores*, each occupying a pillar in the palace. Zieman argues, “Their presence on the pillars implies that the *auctores* and the literary canon are the structure through which fame is disseminated, yet the same image that represents their importance

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<sup>317</sup> Cartlidge, p. 77.



also renders them static and paradoxically mute.”<sup>318</sup> This idea is echoed in *LGWP*: Although Cupid chastises the dreamer for his negative portrayal of women (318-340 F, 241-53 G), the positive retellings also, inevitably, restrict the female narratives. In the Temple of Venus episode of *HF*, Geoffrey chooses not to relate the words of Dido’s final letter (375-82), which, in the context of Fame’s power, suggests that Geoffrey prevents Dido’s words from being revived by Fame. Alternatively, his recommendation to read the letter in an older book perhaps preserves the integrity of a potentially more authoritative text, even as it marginalises and silences the letter. Regardless, Geoffrey the dreamer/listener and Geoffrey the poet both engage in narrative revisionism. Although the many “gestes” in Fame’s palace contribute to noise of “a ful confus matere” (1517), in the end it is the dreamer’s decision to repeat the view “that Omer made lyes” (1477) and to retell Virgilian and Ovidian material in his tale, drawing attention to their differences.

Indeed, the elements containing the dream—framing devices and references to other traditions including the visit to the temple of Venus—illustrate the same sonic and hermeneutic processes that are allegorised in the dream. In other words, the poem’s frame, while offering a degree of distance from the main narrative via the invocations, nevertheless indicates that fame and tradition, like fortune and nature, are universal forces beyond human control. This choice of structure facilitates ideas regarding the material of tradition and the history of oral and musical narrative. The classical foregrounding of the poem has the effect of lending a degree of authority derived from the voice of tradition while simultaneously undermining it as ultimately unstable. As the proem attests, the wisdom that can be potentially gained from the “avisions or [...] figures” (48) of the highest form of dreams is evasive: “oure flesh ne hath no might / To understonde hyt aright, / For hyt is warned to darkly” (49-

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<sup>318</sup> Zieman, p. 83.

51).<sup>319</sup> Geoffrey humorously shies away from any such attempt, instead leaving the duty of interpretation to the “grete clerkys” (53) and ultimately to God to convey his ideas. Delany argues, “[t]he problem foreshadowed in the Proem and Invocation is that fame or tradition, being all-inclusive, provides too many answers; it encourages not certainty but doubt” and that in the absence of authority, “the composition, like the dream, becomes a free-floating quantum of creative or psychic energy, subject to good or evil influences and capable in turn of exercising [them] upon its audience”, making the process of dreaming “nearly synonymous with the creative act”.<sup>320</sup> It is also Geoffrey the poet’s editorial choice to invoke Apollo, the wise “God of science and of lyght” (1091) before the account of Fame’s house, though the appeal may appear somewhat flimsy given Apollo’s broader association with music and other allusions to musicians. We are later told that lesser musicians “countrefete [the mythic harpers] as an ape” (1209) but also, paradoxically, that “craft countrefeteth kynde” (1213).<sup>321</sup> Boitani makes an important distinction between the relative existence of tidings and the real world: “There is no reality here, but only its oral sign [...] It is a reality fragmented and transformed into its narrative sign.”<sup>322</sup> However, oral and narrative signs also help constitute the human experience of ‘reality’.

The appeal to a more learned or divinely superior authority also relates more specifically to the art of oral narrative. The term “counterfeit” indicates the motif of human art versus natural or divine creation but also potentially alludes to the application of the word in French lyric practice. Leach notes that the term “contrefaire” is conventionally translated as “counterfeit” or “feign”, but in the fourteenth century connotes the “copying of the outer appearance of a thing (rather than its inner

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<sup>319</sup> Compare Dante’s invocation before entering Paradise (*Par.* XIII). All quotations of the *Comedy* are from Dante Alighieri, *Dante’s Inferno; Purgatorio; Paradiso: Italian Text with English Translation and Comment by John D. Sinclair*, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977-78).

<sup>320</sup> Sheila Delany, ‘Dreams and Truth [in *The House of Fame*], in *Essays on Chaucer’s Troilus and Criseyde and his Major Early Poems*, ed. C. David Benson (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991), 202-9 (p. 207).

<sup>321</sup> See descriptions of Art’s aping of Nature in *RR* and *DPN*, discussed in the previous chapter.

<sup>322</sup> Boitani, p. 220.

essence)”, and is therefore associated with mindless or irrational mimicking and mirroring, as opposed to duplicity.<sup>323</sup> Another possible sense implied by the technical meaning of “counterfeit” is the practice of grafting and lyric insertion. Grafting is similar to literary borrowing, quotation, and allusion in execution. Both have the effect of making it difficult or impossible to discern the origin of a borrowed fragment or even the extent of the borrowing undertaken. Furthermore, grafting, like allusion and quotation, breathes new life into music and text, which in the terms of *HF* re-exposes portions of old utterances, now part of a new text, to the machinations of Fame. From this perspective, literary and musical allusion and borrowing enable reincarnations of utterances that circularly return to Fame each time they are reborn in new texts.

The humble and explicitly Christian stance of the proem seems self-consciously and preemptively apologetic alongside the other two invocations to Venus (“Cipris”, 518) and Apollo (1092), pleading for help, and particularly “devyne vertu” (1101) from the latter “God of science and of light” (1091). The poet-narrator does not mention God yet refers to pagan deities throughout the poem. Most conspicuous, perhaps, is the fact that Jove sends the eagle to reward Geffrey for his fruitless labour (661-71). This is also one of the earliest uses of the term “invocacion” in Middle English, assuming the 1380 dating of *HF* is accurate.<sup>324</sup> Fyler argues that while Dante is accepted as a source for Chaucer’s use of the invocations (even borrowing lines from Dante), they are common in other kinds of poetry including the French love vision.<sup>325</sup> The invocations read as secular alternatives to prayer—for the craftsman’s art as opposed to his soul. Although they are written, the written word

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<sup>323</sup> Elizabeth Eva Leach, ‘Machaut’s Polytextual Songs’, p. 582; Stephen Perkinson, ‘Portraits and Counterfeits: Villard de Honnecourt and Thirteenth-Century Theories of Representation’, in *Excavating the Medieval Image: Manuscripts, Artists, Audiences: Essays in Honor of Sandra Hindman*, ed. David S. Areford and Nina A. Rowe (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 13-35.

<sup>324</sup> If the 1380 dating of *HF* is accurate, this would predate the two other witnesses from earlier MSS, Lydgate’s *Banner of St Edmund*, vv. 412 and 901 (Hrl 2278 is dated 1450, though the poem may be as early as 1433) and Bokenham’s *Lives of the Saints*, v. 9330 (Arun 327, 1447). *Chaucer’s Dream Poetry*, ed. Phillips and Havelly, footnote to *HF*, 67. Also cf. ‘invocacioun, (n.)’, *MED Online* [accessed 27 February 2019]

<sup>325</sup> See Fyler, ‘Explanatory Notes’ to *HF* (I.66-84) for a summary of connections to French and Italian texts made by various critics; and Minnis, *Shorter Poems*, pp. 174-6.

and the actions of oral prayer and reading aloud are synonymous as the poet calls upon the gods and his audience in the present tense. In the first invocation the I-persona states, “Now herkeneth, as I have yow seyde” (109) and echoes the phrase in the second invocation with, “Now herkeneth, every maner man” (509). The latter line is followed by “[t]hat Englissh understonde kan” (510), which alludes to the vernacularisation of literature and according to Zieman, “the rest of the poem continues this project through the progressive silencing of the classical *auctores* and the production of *voys* as a principle of vernacular poetics.”<sup>326</sup>

The extent to which the *auctores* are intentionally silenced is debatable. More certainly, the invocations prioritise *voys* as a “principle of vernacular poetics” by reconstructing the poet’s role in relation to *HF*’s theme of narrative instability and his relationship to both classical and contemporary vernacular oral and lyric narrative traditions. While the division of the text into invocation and dream passages is reminiscent of the *prosimetrum* form of Boethius’ *Consolation*, its tone constantly indicates the poet’s unsure and hopeful voice as opposed to the wisdom sung by Lady Philosophy to instruct, entertain, and comfort the listener. However, *HF*’s structure does also seek to entertain by including the audience in a dramatization of the writer’s craft. Inviting the audience’s emotional involvement perhaps resembles the effect of lyric insertion. Boulton distinguishes between insertions that have “poetic” and “communicative” functions, where both of which are musical:

“Communicative” describes the function of songs clearly embedded in the narrative and attributed to a character who sings them as a form of communication. In contrast, songs with a “poetic” function affect the formal structure of the work. These lyric insertions are generally not attributed to characters within the narrative, but divide that narrative into sections.<sup>327</sup>

The dream of *HF* alludes to ancient and contemporary oral and lyric storytelling, from the opening lines of the *Aeneid* written on brass in Venus’ temple, to minstrels and Muses around and within Fame’s

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<sup>326</sup> Zieman, p. 83.

<sup>327</sup> Boulton, p. 19.

castle. Virgilian narrative and French troubadour and *trouvère* songs may collectively represent the communicative type, while Chaucer's performative invocations are more poetic.

Perhaps one of the implicit lessons Geoffrey learns from his dream is that voice—employed in spoken and sung narrative—is key to the survival of poetry. By performing his text and even translating some of the tales within it, he corrects the error of his earlier ways: the learned but mocked solitary practice of silent reading (652-660), which has rewarded Geoffrey with neither joy nor companionship (660-71). In the dream, he is forced out of self-imposed exile—the glass museum containing vivid stories of true love disconnected from the rest of the world (symbolised by the temple in the desert)—into the presence of “frend[s]” such as the Eagle (582) and the unnamed person in Fame’s hall (1871-3). In Lydgate’s fifteenth-century dream vision, *The Temple of Glass*, inspired by *HF*, true love is sown in the dreamer and then realised in the waking world.<sup>328</sup> In this respect, Lydgate’s poem is not merely derivative, but dramatises a central, unexplored facet of *HF* to realise a new narrative albeit in a Chaucerian style.<sup>329</sup>

When viewed as lyric, the invocations of *HF* operate at a remove from the dream but also display an intimate view of a poet situating himself in a new relationship to multiple traditions. Indeed, the first invocation’s prayer that God will bring joyous dreams (83-4) to the audience universalises the sentiment that vernacular poetry inspires delight. In *The Divine Comedy*, vision guide Virgil recalls his own poetic art and emphasises the joy associated with it: “I was a poet and sang of that just son of Anchises who came from Troy” [“Poeta fui, e cantai di quell giusto / figliuol d’Anchise che venne da Troia”] (*Inferno* I.73-4). Continuing his address to Dante, he asks,

Ma tu, perchè ritorni a tanta noia?  
perchè non Sali il diletto monte  
ch’ è principio e cagion di tutta gioia?

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<sup>328</sup> John Lydgate, *The Temple of Glass*, in *Fifteenth-Century English Dream Visions: An Anthology*, ed. Julia Boffey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 15-89.

<sup>329</sup> Pearsall is particularly critical of Lydgate’s borrowings in *TG*. See Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 104-115.

But thou, why art thou returning to such misery? Why dost thou not climb the delectable mountain which is the beginning and cause of all happiness? (*Inf.* I.76-8)

Chaucer's tone in *HF* is generally less grandiose than Dante's. (As mentioned above, the eagle mocks Geoffrey's solitude and laziness.) Minnis argues that Chaucer's "concerns seem to be those of the skilled craftsman, or *makere*, rather than the inspired, innovative *poeta*."<sup>330</sup> With respect to the originality of *HF*, Chaucer's poet-persona is inspired and innovative, even as he casts himself as a humble *makere*. With the knowledge of Fame's power and recklessness in mind, the poetic craft is akin to a superhuman endeavour: there are no guarantees of interpretive stability or longevity. It is no surprise, then, that Geoffrey appeals to higher powers dedicated to poetic inspiration and craft while trying his best to convey the dream as he remembers it. Both Geoffrey and Dante pray that the Muses will help them express through poetry what is contained in their memories (cf. *Inf.* II.7-9). Geoffrey's appeals to the Muses are "a powerful metaphor for poetic inspiration," as it had been used by continental poets for centuries.<sup>331</sup> Chaucer was inspired by continental use of the image, and his allusion to the Muses in *HF* is considered to be the first in Middle English literature.<sup>332</sup>

Furthermore, the Muses had long been associated with specifically musical inspiration and creativity. The Greek term *mousikē* is modelled after name of the Muses, originally referring to "an activity, an art, or a craft (*technē*) over which the Muses presided."<sup>333</sup> As discussed previously, the resemblance of music to moral qualities, and its ability to have ethical effects, resulted in its designation as the superior art, according to Greek philosophy. Two later attitudes to the Muses, identified by Hardman, further relate to sound: Macrobius and Martianus Capella connected the nine Muses to the celestial spheres and music theory, while Fulgentius and his followers interpreted them according to

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<sup>330</sup> Minnis, *Shorter Poems*, p. 176.

<sup>331</sup> Douglas Gray, 'Muses', in *The Oxford Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Gray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 342-3 (p. 342).

<sup>332</sup> Boitani, p. 217.

<sup>333</sup> Schueller, p. 5, note 4.

the nine stages of learning and literary composition.<sup>334</sup> Of the nine Muses, Calliope is the only one mentioned by name, and this is in the dream rather than an invocation.<sup>335</sup> “Calliope is interpreted in Fulgentius and other mythographers as ‘optimae vocis’, and is associated with literary utterance.” Chaucer’s choice of Calliope rather than Cleo may initially appear misguided, though as Hardman suggests, the powers of Calliope may encapsulate Cleo’s and there are additional resonances between the latter and the character of Fame (“Cleo” is derived from “kleos”, the Greek term for fame).<sup>336</sup>

The second and third invocations are addressed to Venus and Apollo respectively. Though they are not Muses in the traditional sense, their inspirational powers alluded to in the poem mean they function similarly. Furthermore, Apollo, as god of music, is considered by Macrobius to be the leader of the Muses (*Commentary* II.iii.3; alluding to Proclus’ *Timaeus* 203e).<sup>337</sup> The reference to Venus is a little more misleading. Phillips and Havelly note that she is invoked like a Muse in *PF* (113-119).<sup>338</sup> In *HF*, she is overtly connected to thought rather than love, continuing the focus of the other two invocations. The allusions suggest a close bond between the cognitive processes involved in writing (experience and memory) and the production of song, oral narrative, or poetry.

*HF* notoriously appears to break off, unfinished, after the entrance of someone who appears to Geoffrey to be “[a] man of gret auctoree” (2158), to whom all the tidings in the House of Rumour rush (2144-54). *HF* has explored more challenges to the notion of authority than upholding it, making the tone describing the man’s entry a matter of much debate. Is he really an arbiter of truth (even Jesus, as one critic suggests<sup>339</sup>), or is it a façade? Will he function as the House of Rumour’s counterpart

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<sup>334</sup> Philippa Hardman, ‘Chaucer’s Muses and his ‘Art Poetical’’, *The Review of English Studies*, 37/148 (1986), 478-494 (p. 479).

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.* See above for general associations of the Muses and see Hardman’s argument that Chaucer’s identification of the Muses’ respective associations is more fluid than their original designations. Chaucer’s other references to the Muses are to Calliope and Cleo, Muse of history, in *Tr.*, and Polymia, or Polyhymnia, Muse of sacred song, in *Anelida and Arvite*.

<sup>336</sup> Hardman, p. 482.

<sup>337</sup> Cf. Minnis, *Shorter Poems*, p. 177.

<sup>338</sup> Phillips and Havelly, *Chaucer’s Dream Poetry*, note to *HF* ll. 518-19.

<sup>339</sup> B. G. Koonce, *Chaucer and the Tradition of Fame* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 266-68. See Fyler, ‘Explanatory Notes’ to *HF* l. 2158 for a summary of criticism.

to Lady Fame, arbitrarily deciding which, and in what manner, tidings will transform from rumours to assertions, then to be judged by Fame? Whatever the reason for the apparently unfinished quality of *HF*, it seems likely that the identity of the man is irrelevant, and that the poet's reflection upon the dream contained in the invocations provides more than enough in terms of the thematic treatment of voice and the role it plays in human life. Although the Eagle dashes Geoffrey's wish to be stelled (586), *HF* shows us that poets are rewarded with another kind of transfiguration, impermanent, perhaps, as the many physical materials of *HF* in which names and likenesses are inscribed, sculpted, and housed, but always with the potential for regeneration through rereading and rewriting. Noise, discord, and confusion may be omnipresent, but giving voice to tales allows them to survive despite the temporality of their mortal creators, so that they, like the red and black utterances that take on the physical semblance of their speakers, may be sounded out by new voices and reach new listeners.



*A Vision of Circularity: Concord and Discord in The Parliament of Fowls*

Thus far, this chapter has examined some thematic and symbolic uses of various types of sound, including noise, music, *vox*, and harmony in *BD* and *HF*. *BD* exposes the phenomenology and semantics of sound while reconsidering the relationship of English poetry to the French lyric tradition. *HF* engages with contemporary theories of sound, presenting both a rational, natural philosophical view of communication and an allegorical dramatisation of the comparatively chaotic reality of human communication, interpretation, and recall in terms of oral narrative. In *PF*, Chaucer treats the theme of sound—as speech, noise, and music—in another distinctive way. Of all Chaucer’s dream visions, *PF* includes the most sustained thematisation of sound, and particularly music. The three Boethian types of music are memorably represented in the text: the *musica mundana* of the harmonious celestial spheres (60-3), the *musica humana* implied in the dreamer’s curiosity about the universal truth of love (and his inexperience of it) (1-7), and the *musica instrumentalis* of the birds’ roundel (680-92). Furthermore, natural music is apparent in the text’s description of the order of nature and the cyclical passage of time as measured by the Great Year (66-9), while the roundel unites the artificial and the natural, concluding the text with a transcendent vision of harmony.

In order to achieve this harmonious ending, *PF* accepts the existence of a series of dual natures, including mortal and divine love, the short human lifespan and the Great Year, and omnipresence of harmony despite the prevalent discord and noise in mortal life. One may also read the Neoplatonic humanist theme of unity between the Same and the Different in *PF*. Perfect harmony, like goodness and beauty, is a divine ideal that humans can never fully comprehend nor achieve. Instead, each may aspire to do their best in their own lifetimes, which is the sentiment with which the *PF* begins (1; 71-7). Divine music is inaudible to human ears (aside from exceptional experiences such as that of Macrobius in his dream), but its sensible counterpart, instrumental music, can be used to

learn what lies beyond the realm of the senses. In addition, instrumental harmony is a small part of the variety of sounds that contribute to everyday human experience: it can only be produced by a skilled minority and it can only be recognised and understood by those trained in the discipline. The treatment of music in the sublunar sphere in *PF* is not significant because it alludes to birdsong, the audible symbol of divine harmony, but to various kinds of noise, discord, and disorder, and considers them as part of the natural order. As such, Chaucer responds to a long philosophical and literary tradition of employing motifs of concord and discord that extends back to the *Timaeus* and which is treated in two of his main sources for the first part of *PF*, Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* and Macrobius' *Commentary*. In the Neoplatonist philosophical tradition that inspired Chaucer's dream poetry, it is only Alan of Lille's examination of postlapsarian mankind in *DPN* in which mankind is chastised for his "disruption of universal order" ["mundani ordinis inordinatio"] (8.1) *PF* presents discord and noise as part of the domain of nature, and thus co-existent with, and encompassed by, harmony. Noise, discord, and disorder are equally if not more prominent facets of the imperfect harmony, the *discordia concors*, of human life.

The pre-dream section of the poem establishes a discrepancy between divine perfection, which is harmonious, circular, and eternal, and the relative shortcomings of mortal beings. This comparison is brought to a comic extreme in the noisiest and most chaotic moments of the bird debate, though the poem still provides a vision of how imperfect mortals can begin to understand and to some extent participate in the divine and timeless harmony. The dreamer gains insight into universal order from the dream, and the allegorical birds, with their range of harmony and dissonance, reveal an audible and thus sensible example of the divine harmony in operation, as opposed to the abstract, weightier matter of philosophical books such as the *Somnium Scipionis*. The I-persona is able to witness briefly the natural harmony in the birds' concluding roundel as an indirect expression of the song of the spheres heard by Cicero.

Chaucer presents the audible music of the spheres as an emblem of universal harmony through his summary of Africanus' teachings:

Thanne shewede he hym the lytel erthe that here is,  
At regard of the hevenes quantite;  
And after shewede hy hym the nyne speres;  
And after that the melodye herde he  
That cometh of thilke speres thryes thre,  
That welle is of music and melodye  
In this world here, and cause of armonye. (57-63)

Also significant in this passage is Chaucer's maintenance of Cicero and Macrobius's spirit of *contemptus mundi*, which in the following lines leads to the valuing of "commune profit" (75) as the ideal to which man can strive in his lifetime. This rationale is based on the idea of eternity as cyclical and divine providence as inevitable with respect to the cyclical and perfect passage of time, presented in the singing spheres and reference to "certeyn yeres space" (67), otherwise known as the Great Year, at the end of which the stars and planets return to their original positions.<sup>340</sup> Circularity as a symbol of order returns in the vision's conclusion, through the roundel (perhaps a pun on roundness as well as the repetition of the song and the combination of the birds' many different voices to execute the song) and the dreamer's concluding desire to keep reading, which is arguably a return to and continuation of his activity at the beginning of the narrative.

The allusion to the Great Year establishes a few ideas in the beginning of the poem that are pertinent to the text's comparison of the divine and human experiences of music. Entzminger elaborates the use of this image in *PF*, arguing that Africanus' Stoicism is reassuring: "human life acquires purpose and meaning" because one's life will be judged at the completion of each temporal cycle. Furthermore, he argues, "the moral of the *Somnium* is a function of a particular concept of time, and this same temporal pattern, of apocalyptic cycle overarching individual experience is the source

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<sup>340</sup> Sources differ regarding the exact number of years (usually a few hundred) though the essential idea of a return to original order remains the same. See Pl., *Timaeus* 39d; J. D. North, *Chaucer's Universe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 35-7, 355-6 on context of the doctrine and its use in *PF*.

of both the logic behind the adventures Chaucer's persona struggles to interpret and the aesthetic coherence of the poem he utters."<sup>341</sup>

Music is also applicable to this comparison in terms of the harmony produced by the revolution of the spheres. Symbolically, the Great Year can be viewed as a complete performance of the ultimate cosmic song. Even if humans could hear the *musica mundana*, their lives are too short to experience its full performance. The sentiment that begins the text, "The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne" (1), exactly expresses the difficulty of the narrator's ostensible and subliminal quest for knowledge. "Craft" takes on a variety of senses, including the immediate context of love and writing about love, as well as a deeper knowledge of divine craft. As Phillips and Havelly argue in relation to *PF*, Nature's role as "artificer and mediator of divine creativity" in Alan of Lille's works as well as *RR* suggests that the dream is also an allegorisation of human craft on a divine level.<sup>342</sup>

Furthermore, the narrator's intellectual curiosity, which extends to human life, planetary motion, and love, is diverse, but linked by the underlying theme of harmony. The Neoplatonic notion that music (along with the potential for wisdom) is present in all of creation is echoed early in the text. This is reflected in the list of dreams befitting their dreamers' individual activities, perhaps showing the *musica humana* or invisible forces that unconsciously give form and significance to even the most quotidian aspects of human life: "The wery hunttere, slepyng in his bed / To wode ayeyn his mynde goth anon [...]" (99-105). The repetitive syntax of this passage suggests the narrator's awareness of and desire to understand the motions that drive the macrocosmos and microcosmos alike. Humans only ever witness snippets, species, or accidents indicative of a superior harmony, but never divine harmony itself.

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<sup>341</sup> Robert L. Entzminger, "The pattern of time in *The Parlement of Foules*", *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 5 (1975), 1-11 (p. 2).

<sup>342</sup> Havelly and Phillips, *Chaucer's Dream Poetry*, p. 224.

As the narrator turns to authoritative sources to gain new understanding of these topics—the “newe science” that comes “out of olde bokes” (25, 24)—he is acutely aware of his own mortal limitations, mental and temporal. This preoccupation with time appears again in the description of the narrator’s studying as lasting all day (21, 28). The human experience of time is a linear arc of the circle of eternity and is measured by the progression of daylight rather than the Great Year. At the beginning of the poem, he does not know whether “I flete or synke” (7), and this sentiment recurs in a more substantial form even after a day of reading, when he is “Fulfyld of thought and busy hevynesse” (89). This listlessness recalls the beginning of *BD*, only here it occurs after, or possibly even because, he reads the book. Rather than leading to any revelatory “newe science” or enlightenment about love, his reading offers no straight answers.<sup>343</sup> He seems intellectually and emotionally arrested:

For bothe I hadde thyng which that I nolde,  
And ek I ne hadde that thyng that I wolde. (90-91)

These lines echo the third book of the *Consolation* (here quoted from Chaucer’s translation) in which Boethius admits he cannot remember a time when he was free of worry and she responds: “[a]nd was nat that [...] for that the lakkide somewhat that thow nodest nat han lakkid, or elles thou haddest that thow noldest nat han had?” (*Bo.* III, pr. 3.33-6)<sup>344</sup>

The narrator’s search for truth in *PF* thus appears to be suggested as a remedy for a more general psychological and spiritual confusion, resembling the situation of the dreamer in *BD*. It is worth highlighting the connections between these passages and the *Consolation* to clarify how *PF* establishes a relationship between a metaphorically out of tune or unharmonious protagonist, the symbol of circularity and the themes of divine harmony, truth, and joy. At the beginning of the dream in *PF*, Africanus describes the dreamer as “wrastlyng” (165), which connotes a physical, spiritual, or

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<sup>343</sup> Although the *Commentary* contains no literal discussion of love, it could be interpreted as prerequisite reading for truly understanding human love, for the harmony of the cosmos is also understood as a kind of divine love.

<sup>344</sup> See Charles Muscatine, ‘Explanatory Notes’ to *PF*, *Riverside*, 994-1002, ll. 90-1. Cf. *Consolation* 3, pr. 3.33-36.

intellectual struggle.<sup>345</sup> Entzminger argues that the negative stance of *PF*'s narrator functions similarly to that of Boethius in the *Consolation*, for just as Lady Philosophy leads Boethius to contemplate eternal bliss, in *PF*, Africanus, “subsequent to his admonition against delighting in the world, affirms earthly life as an opportunity to achieve eternal bliss,”<sup>346</sup> and that “Chaucer makes explicit the latently affirmative aspects of the *Somnium*, demonstrating how the temporal and the eternal can be reconciled.”<sup>347</sup> But counter to Entzminger’s emphasis on earthly life, *PF* follows the *Consolation* more closely in that it encourages inward reflection. The dream does not clearly fall into any one Macrobian classification. It is neither plainly divine nor oracular and, indeed, includes comic elements that perhaps suggest an *insomnium*. As with *BD*, it is possible to read the dream of *PF* as an act of turning within that leads not to a rejection of earthly things in a true Neoplatonic, contemplative, or mystical sense, but to a reconciliation of the dreamer’s own relationship to the temporal world.<sup>348</sup>

In the *Consolation*, Philosophy’s songs are aimed at turning (and also tuning) Boethius’ thought inward, and the circle, aside from its negative connotation as the form of Fortune’s wheel, is a symbol of the perfection and completion that the wisdom-seeker should emulate:

Whoso that seketh sooth by a deep thought, and conveyteth not to ben disseyvid by no mysweyes, lat hym rollen and trenden withynne hymself the lyght of his ynwarde sighte; and let hym gaderyn ayein, enclynyng into a compas, the longe moevynges of his thoughtes; and let hym techyn his corage that he hath enclosed and hid in his tresors al that he compasseth or secheth fro without. (*Bo.* III, met. 11.1-9)

In *PF*, the circle motif is more explicitly connected to musical harmony, first of the planets, and later, as I will argue, in the birds’ sung roundel. In the *Consolation*, Lady Philosophy expresses divine wisdom through song, for singing encourages joy and resembles divine harmony; the most natural and divine things are inclined to song:

It liketh me to schewe by subtil soong, with slakke and delytable sown of strenges, how that Nature, mighty, enclyneth and flytteth the governementz of thynges, and by whiche lawes sche, purveiable, kepith the grete world; and how sche, byndyng, restreyneth alle thynges by a boond that may bat ne unbownde. (*Bo.* III, met. 2.1-7)

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<sup>345</sup> ‘wrestlen, v.’, *MED Online* [accessed 27 February 2019].

<sup>346</sup> Entzminger, p. 3.

<sup>347</sup> Entzminger, p. 3, note 7.

<sup>348</sup> Contemplative and mystical views of vision are discussed in relation to *Pearl* in the penultimate section of this thesis.

She cites various examples of animals whose original nature cannot be tamed. Among these is the caged bird who maintains her connection to Nature through the song of “hir swete voys” (*Bo.* II met. 2.30-1). Original nature will always prevail, despite inevitable chaos, by turning disorder into an endless cycle, the “endynge” joined to the “bygynnynge” to make “the cours of itself stable (that it change nat from his proper kynde)” (*Bo.* III, met. 2.43-6). *PF* ends with an image of circularity as well as with the sung roundel, which symbolically resolves the narrator’s unease and the wider problem of reconciling the discord between mortal and divine things. Spearing argues that *PF* is “truly dreamlike” in the sense that “it solves the Dreamer’s problems (at least for us) in the very act of reflecting them [...] a subtle placing of love in the larger context [...] of the relationship between the natural and the human, nature and culture.”<sup>349</sup> Spearing’s reading supports the idea of the dream presenting a solution to the dreamer in its demonstration of a harmonious, circular concord in nature. In essence, the dream, inspired by Macrobius’ book and the appearance of Africanus as a dream guide, encourages the dreamer (and the audience) not to lament the wisdom he lacks, but to turn that which he does have inward, and find harmony in seeming discord.

Lady Philosophy explains that her song helps guide the natural human desire for truth: “men, that ben erthliche beestes, dremen alwey your bygynnynge, although it be with a thynne ymaginacioun [...] [a]nd therefore naturel entencioun ledeth yow to thilke verray good” (*Bo.* III, pr. 3.1-7). The idea that humans have a vague idea of the goal of happiness is reflected in *PF* by the two passages mentioned above: the narrator’s claim that he has what he “nolde” and lacks what he “wolde” (90-1) and the comparison of the dreamer’s struggle to a kind of metaphorical inner wrestling (165). The Neoplatonic tenet that reason is the divine gift that allows humans to outstrip animals by attaining truth, and therefore true happiness, was expressed by John of Salisbury, among others (*Metalogicon*

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<sup>349</sup> Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry*, p. 90.

I.1).<sup>350</sup> As Southern articulates, medieval scholastics espoused the view that human dignity lies in the ability to use the gift of reason to understand the divine purpose of Creation, and by extension, “through reason, as well as through Revelation [...] the divine nature itself.”<sup>351</sup> At the beginning of the dream in *PF*, Africanus predicates the inspirational power of the dream upon the dreamer’s reason: “And if thow haddest connyng for t’endite / I shal the shewe mater of to wryte” (162-68).

Curiously, the dreamer does not learn from listening to the heavenly spheres, as Scipio had, but from birds, the earthly choir that inspires love, praises natural harmony, and symbolises the divine harmony of love that rules the universe. The birds are also a source of immense noise and discord, evoking the basest human qualities and the irrationality of nonhuman animals. As Rowland explains, moral animal symbolism and personification were common throughout medieval literature and art and “the animal world which would have been familiar to Chaucer was one in which they stood for qualities meaningful to man.”<sup>352</sup> Birds were particularly popular as pets and as symbols because of the singing and speaking ability of certain species, and the generic motif of birdsong at the beginning of many dream visions could be used as a symbol of divine and instrumental music, as well as courtly and base erotic desire. The Bible makes reference to around fifty birds and, notably, the absence of birds in desolate landscapes,<sup>353</sup> associating particular birds, such as the dove of the Holy Spirit and the eagle of St John, with the divine and holy, while these species and others also have broader connotations.<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> John of Salisbury, *The Metalogicon of John of Salisbury*, trans. Daniel D. McGarry (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1955), p. 9.

<sup>351</sup> R. W. Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe, vol. 1: Foundations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 23. Also cf. p. 36.

<sup>352</sup> Beryl Rowland, *Blind Beasts: Chaucer’s Animal World* (Chatham, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1971).

<sup>353</sup> ‘Birds’, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1 A-D, Geoffrey W. Bromiley (gen. ed.) (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), p. 511.

<sup>354</sup> For images of birds in relation to desolation see Jer. 4:25, 9:10; 12:4; Zeph. 1:3. Likewise, the sounds of a dove or a raven suggest a melancholy or ominous situation: Isa. 59:11; Ezk. 7:16; Zeph. 2:14.



Furthermore, the idea that nature is a teacher or indicative of the world beyond is common to Christian theology and Neoplatonism. In Job 12:7-9, creation is portrayed as having an innate natural wisdom:

But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee:  
Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.  
Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this? (Job 12:7-9)<sup>355</sup>

Man is construed as intellectually superior to animals, but it is also made apparent that there is much wisdom to be gained by observing and humbling oneself before nature.

At best, nature can reveal the limits of reason. This notion appears in Chaucer's works and philosophical allegory. In *The Squire's Tale* (479-87), Canacee's virtue is recognised and validated by her affinity with Nature: a ring allows her to understand the thoughts and speech of animals, including the courtly love story related to her by a hawk. Canacee's moral purity and alienation from a debased society arguably brings her into marvellous proximity to things natural rather than rational. Another example is in the *Anticlaudianus*, in which Fronesis is required to dispense with her chariot of reason before progressing into the highest sphere of Jove's palace (V.246-55). Certainly, as Spearing argues, *PF* resists straightforward, rational interpretation, rejecting "direct statements and conceptual formulations" in favour of experience through visual and symbolic dream discourse.<sup>356</sup> Chaucer's portrayal of the birds, their songs, and their noise in *PF* is challenging and comic. The beginning of the dream contains heavenly birdsong, though the bird debate in which they speak English rather than sing reveals them to be at turns earthly, human, or emphatically animal. The idea of learning, whether from dreams or nature, is mocked, with the avian register encompassing the register and ideals of courtly romance, as with the royal tercelles (390-483), as well as the barely articulate "Kek kek! kokkow! quek quek!" of the goose, cuckoo, and duck (498-500). The apparent discord produced by the birds'

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<sup>355</sup> Unless otherwise noted, biblical passages are from *The Bible: Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>356</sup> Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry*, p. 90.

many vocalisations, voices, and registers may be read in terms of polyphony, the medieval musical style characterised by the simultaneous performance of multiple distinct voices and melodies.

*Natural Variety: Polyvocality and Polyphony*

Critics have highlighted the affinities between music and *PF*'s perceived resistance to closure in relation to the themes of harmony, disharmony or antithesis, and discordant concord.<sup>357</sup> Campbell's view that "the study of musical composition sheds a great deal of light on the modes of thought which conditioned Chaucer's narrative style—open-ended, simultaneous, contrapuntal" alludes to the relationship between actual musical material and the wider application of its guiding principles, an idea which has been central to this chapter.<sup>358</sup> In the previous section, I suggested a musical reading of the symbol of the circle, and that the dream aims to attune the protagonist's thoughts to the circular movement and qualities of universal harmony. The dream dramatises the dreamer's act of self-reflection and observation of various forms of concord and discord in the natural world, using birds as adaptable symbols of noise and harmonious song, nonsense and reason, as well as base and elevated love. The dream, like those experienced by the protagonists of Chaucer's other dream visions, disrupts and recalibrates the narrator's mode of thought. In *PF*, the dreamer witnesses the copious variety of nature, from the ridiculous to the sublime, in a manner that is heavily reminiscent of ideas from *musica speculativa* and *practica*. The dream ultimately enacts a transformation from discord into harmonious concord, sonically and metaphorically, and from an incomplete, linear, mortal perspective of time, to an intimation of the cosmic view of eternity, in which the short arc of human life is merely a part of

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<sup>357</sup> The most detailed analysis of music in *PF* is David Chamberlain, "The Music of the Spheres and *The Parlement of Foules*", *The Chaucer Review*, 5/1 (1970), 32-56; also see Michael R. Kelley, "Antithesis as the Principle of Design in the *Parliament of Foules*", *The Chaucer Review*, 14/1 (1979), 61-73; John P. McCall, "The Harmony of Chaucer's *Parliament*", *The Chaucer Review*, 5/1 (1970), 22-31; Sarah Emsley, "'By Evene Acord': Marriage and Genre in the *Parliament of Fowls*", *The Chaucer Review*, 34/2 (1999), 139-149.

<sup>358</sup> Campbell, p. 284.

the circular transit of the planets known as the Great Year. *PF*'s date of composition is believed to be 1380-82, which was roughly contemporary to dates attributed to *Boece*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, and parts of *The Legend of Good Women*, among other works.<sup>359</sup> There are fourteen surviving manuscript authorities plus Caxton's 1477-78 edition.<sup>360</sup>

I would further suggest the value, to *PF* criticism, of a reconsideration of nonlinear approaches to writing and listening to poetry that paralleled the medieval shift from monophonic to polyphonic song. McCall argues that *PF* should not be read with the expectancy of "linear unity leading to [...] a reconciliation or a resolution".<sup>361</sup> He instead opts for an understanding which corresponds to contemporary developments affecting the way music was created and heard: *PF* depicts "conflicting elements [...] in concord and balance [...] we seem to have been listening for the monophonic sound of Gregorian chant when, in fact, the poem sings to us in counterpoint and polyphony—like a complex Fourteenth-Century motet, or even a roundel of "foules"."<sup>362</sup> Divine harmony is also linked to political and social harmony, as seen in the *Somnium Scipionis*.<sup>363</sup> *PF*'s themes of harmony and discord can be interpreted politically.<sup>364</sup> Méchoulan, discussing the impact of polyphony on human experience more broadly, identifies a further social link that is interwoven within medieval conceptions of time. Polyphonic song, as opposed to church plainchant, can be secular or religious. Méchoulan argues:

[Q]uantitative clock-time supersedes the more elastic church-time: the measurement of time is now divorced from religion; it passes from the priest's hands to those of the merchant and to the power of the state. Like the clock, polyphony implies another way of experiencing time, since time has now a spatial dimension (like the roundness of the clock, which is but one residue of the cyclical conception of time, a mere shape, or as in polyphonic writing, which is vertical). A new temporality, which is conceptual, metric, measurable and architectural, replaces the old musical organization.<sup>365</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> Benson, 'Canon and Chronology', p. xxv.

<sup>360</sup> For a list of MSS, see Vincent J. DiMarco, 'Textual Notes' to *PF*, *Riverside*, p. 1147.

<sup>361</sup> McCall, p. 23.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>363</sup> McCall draws attention to Augustine's citation of a passage from *Somnium Scipionis* in the *City of God*, II.21.

<sup>364</sup> See Travis, pp. 201-266.

<sup>365</sup> Eric Méchoulan, 'From Music to Literature', *SubStance*, 28/1 (1999), 42-56 (p. 47).

Such a sweeping assessment of polyphony's effects on the societal consciousness should of course be taken *cum grano salis*. However, this critique touches on potential phenomenological and aesthetic developments that are possible in philosophical dream visions such as *PF*, and are visible in Chaucer's thematisation of music and time in the poem. Other dream visions allude to the idea of temporality through time-keeping objects such as clocks and the sound of church bells, such as the ending of *BD*, in which a tolling bell (an aural measurement of time) unifies multiple allegorical and psychological layers of the poem, and a comparable bell conceit in *The Kingis Quair*, which will be discussed later. While lacking any literal clock or bell, *PF* makes numerous references to the measurement and passing of time, some of which have been noted above.

From the beginning of the dream, a seeming discord is established through the dreamer's entrance into the garden of love. The gate contains two inscriptions that seem to be at odds: one inviting those who will have a happy and fulfilling experience in love, the other beckons sorrowful prisoners of love (136) (cf. the inscription on the gates of Hell in *Inferno* III.1-9). The hesitant dreamer of *PF* is comically shoved through the gate by Africanus (154), a seeming reward for his intellectual toil (112). After this forced entry, the dreamer beholds the reflection of divine harmony in the beauty and plenty of natural flora and fauna. Many species of natural creation, trees "eche in hys kynde" (174) and animals "of gentil kynde" (196), are enumerated alongside their practical or symbolic values. One may also note that these are specifically human uses—this suggests that all of creation is intended for mankind's benefit or that the dreamer interprets natural order according to his own human perspective, suggesting self-reflection.<sup>366</sup> Furthermore, this *ekphrasis* of natural perfection and eternal bliss is complemented by the musical expression of harmony in birdsong:

On every bow the bryddes herde I synge,  
 With voys of aungel in here armonye;  
 Some besyede hem here bryddes forth to brynge;  
 The litel conyes to here pley gonne hye;  
 And ferther al about I gan aspye

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<sup>366</sup> Compare Genesis I.26-28.

The dredful ro, the buk, the hert and hynde,  
Squyrels, and bestes smale of gentil kynde.

On instruments of strenges in acord  
Herde I so pleye a ravyshyng swetnesse,  
That God, that makere is of al and lord,  
Ne herde nevere beter, as I gesse.  
Therwith a wynd, unnethe it myghte be lesse,  
Made in the leves grene a noyse softe  
Acordaunt to the foules song alofte. (190-203)

Chamberlain writes that “the actual *musicality* of the elements is carefully emphasized by Chaucer’s use of the word *accord*”.<sup>367</sup> The hierarchy of bird *genera* according to their dwellings and diets as well as the descriptions of each species also touches on the more general principle of harmony as order. The demonstration of cross-species co-operation recalls the spirit of common profit and espouses it as part of what is good and natural. Even the wind, a potentially destructive force, accords and blends with the birds’ song and mysterious sound of stringed instruments played by unseen performers. Chamberlain also notes that the three varieties of music in the wood embody not only “a threefold instrumental music [...] (*harmonica*, *organica*, and *rhythmica*), but also a threefold harmony among four degrees of being that suggests original nature or Eden.”<sup>368</sup> He adds that these types of sonorous music “are created by three different kinds of life, vegetable leaves, animal voice, and manual art,” and even the wind, “fit precisely the famous Aristotelian classes of vegetable, sensible, and rational being” and “sheer existence”: “This scheme was common knowledge after the late twelfth century, and it is used obviously in some of Chaucer’s major sources”, including Macrobius (*Commentary*, I.xiv.9-13), *Purgatorio* (25.52-75), and RR (19046-50).<sup>369</sup> The entire scale of mortal being as well as all types of earthly instrumental music are thus represented as part of the variety of nature. It is also a natural and supernatural location, described as a place of timelessness, for “No man may there waxe sek ne old”, unlimited joy, “more a thousandfold / Than man can telle”, and everlasting daylight: “ne nevere wolde

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<sup>367</sup> Chamberlain, ‘Music of the Spheres’, p. 35.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

it nyghte, / But ay cler day to any mannes syghte” (207-210). Concordant plenitude is thus presented as part of the true ideal of nature, and it is through a harmonious co-existence of all levels of being that the divine qualities of supreme goodness, joy, illumination, and eternal stability become tangible on earth.

However, there are still paradoxes within this apparently perfect vision. Eternity and temporality paradoxically seem to co-exist. The birds’ annual assembly, additionally given the specific date of St Valentine’s Day, suggests an idea of time that appears to contradict the idea of eternal May inscribed on the garden gate: “Thorgh me men gon unto the welle of grace, / There grene and lusty May shal evere endure (129-30). The appearance of eternity is rendered even more problematic by the apparently oxymoronic quality of final words on that side, “Al open am I – passe in, and sped thee faste!” (133) If the gate is eternally open, the sense of urgency seems irrelevant. The opposite side of the gate also mingles eternity and finality, where “mortal strokes of the spere / Of which Disdayn and Daunger is the gyde” coexist with trees that “nevere [...] shal fruyt ne leves bere” (135-7). Gabrovsky argues that the poem, with inconsistencies such as these, resembles a medieval thought experiment involving multiple worlds theory.<sup>370</sup> One may also suggest that music is a factor in such an experiment in harmonisation. By the late fourteenth century, polyphony had become common in church song. With regard to the simultaneously sounding voices of polyphony, Méchoulan argues that among the medieval quadrivial arts “[m]usic alone is able to thematize the relation to the other [and] permits us to think [of] alterity as unity [by] acknowledging that the principle of similitude [and an] intimacy between the disparate.”<sup>371</sup> This may at first seem a broad and even tenuous statement, however it raises an illuminating point in the context of *PF*. The multiple voices of polyphony may be interpreted according to this “intimacy”. The dream, with its birdsong and bird debate, is characterised by the

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<sup>370</sup> Gabrovsky, p. 57.

<sup>371</sup> Méchoulan, pp. 45-46.

presence of the concordant and discordant, musical and amusical, verbalised and emotive vocalisations (also species of *vox*) which are nevertheless integral to the poem's vision of universal harmony.

While heavenly music conveys eternity and perfection, amusicality, noise, and discord are associated with the baser characteristics of mortal beings. When the dreamer first encounters the parliament, the birds are described as cacophonous. They produce "so huge a noyse" (312)

That erthe, and eyr, and tre, and every lake  
So ful was that unethe was there space  
For me to stonde, so ful was al the place. (313-15)

The variety and multitude of birds is conflated with their immense noise, contributing to a general sense of confusion. The next hundred lines work to establish order through the dreamer's description of the arrangement of birds according to their species under the presidency of Nature: "This noble emperesse, ful of grace, /Bad every foul to take his owne place" (319-20). The purpose of their gathering is to find mates, or to make accord with one another, and this term is twice repeated:

And ech of hem dide his besy cure  
Benygnely to chese or for to take,  
By hire\* accord, his formel or his make. (369-71)                      [\*i.e., Nature's]

Continuing the theme of *musica mundana*, Nature is described as "knyt[ting]" the elements together "by evene noumbres of accord" (381). Number is of course the basis of all music. Despite the appearance of accord and numerical moderation, the debate itself is emphatically temporal, perhaps because mortal procreation is ultimately halted by old age and death. These images of perfection and accord are repeatedly threatened by the birds' descent into noisy and time-consuming arguing. Even Nature, the divine mother of all creation, seems to be aware of time passing when she states "As faste as I may speke, I wol yow speede" (385). The debate between the tercel is also measured temporally by the dreamer: "from the morwe gan this speche laste / Tyl downward went the sonne wonder faste" (489-90). One may compare this endless toil with the narrator's studying, which also lasts all day (21, 28). They debate from morning until sunset, at which point the birds noisily protest, so loudly that the very forest seems unable to contain physically their force:

The noyse of foules for to ben delyvered  
So loude rong, "Have don, and lat us wende!"  
That wel wende I the wode hadde al to-shyvered. (491-3)

The tone of the courtly tercel's debate, which the dreamer describes as the most "gentil ple in love or other thyng" heard by any man (485), is quickly reduced to "cursede pletynge" (495) and replaced by the "Kek kek! kokkow! quek quek!" of the goose, cuckoo, and duck combined—a "noyse" which resounds through the dreamer's ears (498-500). Comparisons between classes of *vox* are here invited, though the "gentil" (and genteel) tercelet's assessment of the goose's argument as coming from "Out of the donghil" may seem to characterise the majority of the remaining birds' debate (597).<sup>372</sup>

Indeed, the collective lack of authority and intelligent reasoning between the birds is articulated by the turtledove, whose words associate reading and singing with reason: "bet is that a wyghtes tonge reste / Than entermeten hym of such doinge, / Of which he neyther rede can ne synge" (514-16). At this point, it seems the only way of controlling the noise is by delaying it, for the discord is only interrupted by Nature's exasperated impositions of silence, ever having "an ere / To murmur of the lewednesse byhynde", hoping to "unbynde" them "fro this noyse" (519-23). The emphasis on sound makes Nature into an orchestrator not only of the debating parties, but of their noise. Her ear is attuned to the lewd and indistinct murmurings of the birds, some of which may be generated in response to the turtledove. She tries to restore order by sounding her own "facound voys", the voice of reason, to have them "hold" their "tongues" (521). As Nature struggles in her task—here described as unbinding the group from noise—we are reminded of Nature's superior binding force and her ability to create harmonious accord among disparate things.

However, the disagreement among the birds reveals their arguments to be mutually incompatible, making a harmonious resolution difficult or impossible. The goose's view that the rejected tercel should direct their loves elsewhere jars with the sparrowhawk's support of

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<sup>372</sup> For another scatological reference in a bird debate, see "schitworde" (l. 286) in *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ed. and trans. Neil Cartlidge (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003).



steadfastness. His sarcastic remark regarding the “parfit resoun of a goos” and his diagnosis of the goose’s loose tongue as the result of foolishness (568-74) reveals this irreconcilable tension, as does the laughter this brings about among “gentil foules alle” (575). After all, the birds only act according to the qualities attributed to them by Nature, as alluded to in the merlin’s vilification of the cuckoo (“For no fors is of lak of thy nature!” (615)) and his suggestion that they should all remain single “syn they may nat acorde” (608). Taken to its extreme, the cuckoo’s solution directly contradicts the goal of procreation: some accord must be reached.

#### *Harmonious Reconciliation: The Roundel*

The cuckoo’s remarks suggest that a lack of accord, or discord, accompanies the absence of love. In effect, this paradoxically indicates a link between love and *accord*, and its related term, *concord*. At the beginning of the poem the narrator intimates his ignorance of love. Perhaps love is difficult to understand partially because of all its apparent discords, which are demonstrated in the dream debate. Chamberlain notes that *Bo.* (IV, met. 6) emphasises the terms *amor* and *concors* more than his source, and Chaucer’s changes “bring out more sharply that the “acord” or music of the world is caused by love”.<sup>373</sup> From Aristotle and Plato onwards, music had been valued among the quadrivial arts for its potential for moral influence and instruction, especially since it is perceptible to the senses and can directly affect the emotions. Boethius wrote that the harmony of the spheres is created by cosmic love; as such, the two are intertwined. The understanding of music and its harmonies, for Boethius, provides a way to understand the more abstract and intangible love and music which guides the universe.

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<sup>373</sup> Chamberlain, ‘Music of the Spheres’, p. 37; also see notes 34-5, which tallies Boethius’ and Chaucer’s uses of the terms “concord”, “accord”, and “amor” in parallel passages.

By delaying her choice of mate for a year, the formel symbolically trusts in divine providence and the underlying notion that the superior forces of love's harmony will prevail. One may also view both poems as simply sublimating the types of music presented into a form that embraces the transcendental, bodily, and aesthetic roles music may play in the dreamers' lives, which, as discussed next, also occurs in *KQ*. The ending of *PF* promotes the linearity of mortal time and cyclicity of the divine as coexistent. The revolving of a year back to the same date resembles the circular motion of the Great Year in miniature. Moments of time become relative, for Nature again expresses her disapproval of "taryng lengere here" (657) even though she also says, "[a] yer is nat so longe to endure" (660). Perhaps a comparison may be drawn between the experience of discord, as in the bird debate, which makes time seem longer even as it quickly slips away, with the effects of accord, concord, and harmony that encourage the turning of one's attention to the eternal and the divine. The poem's positive ending, then, results from a change in attitude towards time that is taught by the principle of harmony; and the roundel, another circular pun, thematically represents the internalisation of love and harmony.

The birds' roundel may be considered as a musical creation of harmony out of the discord of the debate. The roundel does not appear in all manuscript witnesses: three provide versions of the roundel, while William Thynne's inclusion of it in his 1532 *Workes of Geffray Chaucer* suggests for Phillips and Havely that it may have been derived from an independent textual authority.<sup>374</sup> Based on the dating of the texts that have the roundel, Hanna argues that it is "a mid-fifteenth-century intrusion, Chaucerian perhaps but not part of *PF*", and furthermore, the piece "does not look as if it were ever intended for feathered singers."<sup>375</sup> Campbell notes, however, that some manuscripts contain the

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<sup>374</sup> The three MSS are Gg.4.27 (Cambridge University Library), LVII (St John's College, Oxford), and Digby 181 (Bodleian Library, Oxford). (Phillips and Havely, *Chaucer's Dream Poetry*, p. 279.)

<sup>375</sup> Ralph Hanna III, 'Presenting Chaucer as an Author', in *Medieval Literature: Texts and Interpretations*, ed. T. W. Machan (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1991), 17-40 (pp. 31, 34).

popular French refrain, “Que bien ayme a tardie oublie” in their rubrics, even in the absence of the roundel, which he sees as evidence that the poem reflects Chaucer’s familiarity with musical forms and techniques, particularly French ones.<sup>376</sup> As indicated by Minnis, “Now welcome, somer” is proverbial and appears in multiple French works, where it would have been sung with instrumental accompaniment.<sup>377</sup> Its inclusion in some versions of *PF* may represent the first use of a roundel as an intercalated lyric in Middle English poetry.<sup>378</sup> While it may be unlikely that the roundel formed part of the original poem, the scribal and editorial response to graft it on strongly suggests that the audience would have seen the roundel as an apt conclusion, in keeping with the musical and performative aspects of the poem as well as its celebratory and joyous spirit. Given the text’s concern with the significance of harmony, the presence of the roundel is fitting.

For even the roundel does not totally eliminate the earlier sense of discord, nor is it entirely inconclusive. Campbell argues that the roundel “demands harmony” through its dual rhyme scheme and double refrain and reinforces Nature’s “union of once-discordant birds in both sexual bliss and mutual harmony,” a significance which would not have been lost on a courtly audience.<sup>379</sup> However, the ending of *PF* should not be read as totally harmonious or completely unresolved. The dreamer is not woken by the song, but by the birds’ “showtyng whan hir song was do” (688). This suggests that the song is merely an emblem or imitation of concord; a formal gesture that is in fact ineffectual, perhaps paralleling Nature’s difficult task of arbitrating the birds under the guise of a parliamentary debate. At the same time, however, the dreamer and the birds do not seem preoccupied with the lack of closure. As Minnis writes, “Inconclusiveness and resistance to closure are [...] part and parcel of a textual strategy which illustrates and affirms plurality.”<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> Campbell, ‘Machaut and Chaucer’, p. 275.

<sup>377</sup> Minnis, *Shorter Poems*, p. 256.

<sup>378</sup> Minnis, *Shorter Poems*, p. 262.

<sup>379</sup> Campbell, pp. 276-7.

<sup>380</sup> Minnis, *Shorter Poems*, p. 317.

*PF* ultimately seems to turn to a higher arbiter for its positivity, and God's order embraces cacophony as well as harmony.<sup>381</sup> *Discordia concors*, or unity from dissimilarity, is another theme that appears in the *Consolation* and the philosophical allegories of Alan of Lille, continuing the Neoplatonist tradition of all being existing as a harmonious admixture of uniformity and difference, similitude and variation. In *DPN*, love is described through a rhetorical list of paradoxes, suggestively discord, or even discordant concord, as the nature of Cupid's love (9, met. 1-18). Later, as part of Genius' intervention, Hymen performs a song to make consonance from dissonance (16, pr. 29), curing mankind's inversion of order.<sup>382</sup> In the *Anticlaudianus*, discordant concord appears in the highest sphere (383). Furthermore, after Nature creates the human form, the allegorical figure of Concord links the independent figures of the soul and body within mankind (435).<sup>383</sup> The ending of *PF* appears to create (or at least imitate) concord from discord, the roundel's harmony potentially alludes to the idea of *discordia concors* as it appears in Chaucer's sources. Minnis disagrees, arguing that allusions to material dealing with the theme of *discordia concors*, as in the works of Boethius, Alan, and Ambrose, are "simply not in the text" of *PF*.<sup>384</sup> However, Chaucer's use of musical themes and the imagery of circularity paralleled in the beginning and end of the text establishes the dreamer's dilemma in terms of accord and discord between the mundane and the divine, irrespective of specific textual allusions. *PF*'s close engagement with the *Consolation* further supports the reading of the text's resolution as playing on the motif of *discordia concors* indirectly if not explicitly. Boethius famously applies the idea of unity in plurality extending to the spiritual realm. Philosophy sings, "the world with stable feyth variety accordable chaungynges" and "al this accordaunce [and] ordenaunce of thynges is bounde with love" (*Bo.* II, met. 8.1-2; 14-6). Love enables the bonds of marriage and friendship. The metrum concludes

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<sup>381</sup> See Chamberlain, 'Music of the Spheres', p. 54.

<sup>382</sup> Concord and melody are also mentioned in *DPN* (18, pr. 14) in relation to the soul and chaste affection.

<sup>383</sup> For more *Anticlaudianus* passages on music, see ll. 321; 323 (power of music); 383 (discordant concord in the highest sphere).

<sup>384</sup> Minnis, *Shorter Poems*, p. 311.

with an appeal: “O weleful were mankynde, yif thilke love that governeth hevene governede yowr corages” (25-7) The dream of *PF* ends embracing the spirit of common profit even regardless of the instrumental harmony of the roundel, rendering the postponement of the debate itself an allusion to natural continuation. That the song joyously celebrates the harmony that exists in microcosm and in relation to the macrocosm merely accentuates the insight. The roundel invokes harmony as eternal, both through its imagery and musical form. It thematises the transition from winter to summer, using singing and awakening (689) to convey the revivification accompanied by the changing of the seasons. The repetition of the first two lines in the second verse and the first three lines at the end emphasises the inevitable promise of summer’s sun eclipsing winter and dispelling the “longe nights blake”. In performance, the term “roundel” not only connotes circularity but, through its prescribed form, confirmed by Chaucer in the line, “The note, I trowe, maked was in Fraunce” (677), rhetorically sustains the theme of eternity and roundness. As noted above, Minnis argues the lyric, “Now welcome, somer”, is proverbial and occurs in French works, and that the roundel would have been sung and accompanied by an instrumental performance.<sup>385</sup> In performance, the repetition of the song would occlude a listener’s sense of any clear beginning or ending, lending the repeated lines more rhythmic and linguistic prominence.<sup>386</sup>

In a different sense, the grafted song, whether it was included in its totality or merely cited, creates lyric discontinuity, allowing a suspension of the temporality of the bird debate and affording the audience a metaphorical glimpse of eternity. The line, “[q]ui bien aime a tard oublie”, included in some manuscripts, reinforces the point that love, as a superior force, resists the effects of time and limits of mortal memory. As discussed in the chapter on music theory, in *De musica* VI, Augustine explains how the three rhythms pertaining to human experience, memory, perception, and sound,

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<sup>385</sup> Minnis, *Shorter Poems*, p. 256.

<sup>386</sup> Chamberlain, in ‘Music of the Spheres’, p. 51, has written on the verse structure and rhyme scheme of the roundel as music so this will not be repeated here.

allow mankind to become more attuned with universal rhythms; in this way, sensible rhythms, in music and verse, can activate the deepest rhythms of the soul.<sup>387</sup> This supplies an answer to the dreamer's initial challenge of learning: the dream instructs the narrator's soul in the tenets of universal harmony by allegorising its basic premises of accord and discord audibly, in keeping with the relationship between music and morality.

Furthermore, the musical ending of the poem presents a harmony that is polyphonic. This is apparent not only in the sense that the differing views of the birds are all subsumed, however briefly, in the formel's deferral (their views discordant but at the same time given equal voice by virtue of their vocalization), but also in the performative quality of the text. It reflects a combination of participatory genres: debate or *demande d'amour*, dream vision, and lyric. Minnis reads the poem as a whole as a performance text, intended to encourage rather than conclude debate—a view which also respects the poem's perceived incompleteness.<sup>388</sup> Strohm's view of medieval literature as an utterance, calling for audience participation and interpretation, also complements the poem's tendency to invite multiple voices.<sup>389</sup> Gérard Le Vot, who also sees polyphony as unhindered by the discrepancies between individual voices and the experience of voice in localised time, describes the matter thus:

Henceforth, the musician neglects the diversity and the plurality of the concrete times [...], he neglects their juxtaposition and their disjunction inside of a singular "univocal" experience and assumes another kind of plurality in the simultaneous voices, a plurality made of interrelations, tensions and concordances. The music he makes is henceforth analyzable and mentally reversible.<sup>390</sup>

Polyphony, or, following Boethius, what I describe as discordant concord, may be understood as revealing and accentuating the bonds between potentially discordant voices rather than excluding

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<sup>387</sup> Augustine, *De musica liber VI: a critical edition with a translation and introduction by Martin Jacobsson* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2002), p. 39.

<sup>388</sup> Minnis, *Shorter Poems*, p. 312.

<sup>389</sup> Paul Strohm, 'Chaucer's Audience(s): Fictional, Implied, Intended, Actual', *The Chaucer Review*, 18/2 (1983), 137-147, (p. 139). He adopts this idea from Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 146.

<sup>390</sup> Gérard Le Vot, 'Considérations sur le temps et la musique au Moyen Age', *Le Nombre du Temps: En Hommage à Paul Zumthor* (Paris: Champion, 1988), 137-52 (p. 139). (Méchoulan's translation.)

them. In this respect, *PF* contains another layer of dream parliament and is itself a musical assembly and debate.

In *PF*, Chaucer presents the cosmic harmony of love in Neoplatonic (and through the roundel, lyric) terms. The dreamer, perceiving an inner discordance, dreams of music and noise, and accord and discord, in the natural world. The dream vision ultimately portrays nature as *discordia concors*, embracing the variety of all living beings as belonging to a wider, perfect harmony symbolised by the image of the circle, in the Great Year and the debate's deferral, and emphasised with the addition of a lyric roundel. McCall relates the harmony of *PF* to the portrayal of Music in the *Anticlaudianus* (III.410-445), which highlights the importance of multiple voices, similar and dissimilar:<sup>391</sup> it is “not a single pitch but a union of pitches that creates every melody and sweet song, a sound both like and unlike, diverse and yet the same, single and simple, double, different, and other” “[...] omne melos dulcesque sonorum / cantus non gignit vox una sed unio vocum, / dissimilis similisque sonus, diversus et idem, / unicus et simplex duplex difformis et alter”] (426-9). Transcendental harmony, from a Neoplatonist perspective, is only properly understood in its full variety. The dream vision which concludes the analysis of music in Middle English dream poetry, *KQ*, also has a dreamer who learns about harmony in terms of birdsong, though the vision integrates philosophical and aesthetic music theory, and unlike Chaucer's dream visions, follows the narrator after he awakes from the dream, demonstrating the recovery of harmony in reality.

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<sup>391</sup> McCall, p. 30.

## Musica *from Dream to Reality* in 'The Kingis Quair

James I of Scotland's (1394-1437) dream vision, *The Kingis Quair*, is widely read as a Chaucerian text in the sense that it is one of many works following in the wake of Chaucer's popularity, and to some extent emulates Chaucer's style. It is almost certain that James had read Chaucer, having referenced the earlier poet alongside Gower in the final stanza of *KQ* as his "maisteris dere" and "superlative as poetis laureate" (1373; 1376). *KQ*'s date of composition is generally placed shortly after James' release from captivity in 1423-4, postdating all of Chaucer's dream visions.<sup>392</sup> It bears many resemblances to Chaucer's dream poems, particularly the structure of *HF*, though *KQ* is complete. The term "rhyme royal" was first named for its use in *KQ*, which is written in a seven-line stanza with an *ababbcc* rhyme scheme: Mooney and Arn argue that James likely borrowed the form from Chaucer's *PF* and *Tr*.<sup>393</sup> Its only extant witness, the late-fifteenth-century manuscript Arch. Selden B.24 (fols 192-211), is an anthology of English and Scottish verse selected with care and including *Tr*, several other texts inaccurately attributed to Chaucer, and Clanvowe's dream vision, *The Book of Cupid*.<sup>394</sup> The manuscript and the blended characteristics of *KQ* resulted in a text that bridges genres, cultures, languages, and dialects.<sup>395</sup>

*KQ* includes many motifs already prevalent in the genre: a sleepless, uninspired narrator; a dream which allegorises his inner turmoil; an ending which somehow restores the narrator's poetic

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<sup>392</sup> Julia Boffey, 'Introduction' to James I of Scotland, *The Kingis Quair*, in *Fifteenth-Century English Dream Visions*, ed. Julia Boffey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 90-3 (p. 92). This is much earlier than what is assumed to be a copy in the poem's sole surviving witness from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, Bodleian MS Arch. Selden. B. 24., *ibid*, p. 90.

<sup>393</sup> *The Kingis Quair and Other Prison Poems*, ed. Linne R. Mooney and Mary-Jo Arn (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005), p. 22.

<sup>394</sup> See Julia Boffey and A.S.G. Edwards, 'Introduction' to *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer and The Kingis Quair: A Facsimile of Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Arch. Selden. B. 24*, ed. Boffey and Edwards (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997), 1-5, for further information on the dating and contents of the manuscript.

<sup>395</sup> Bill Hodapp, 'The Kingis Quair in Linguistic and Manuscript Contexts', Durham University IMEMS lecture (11 May 2015).



skill or looks forward to writing about the dream. It is often described as a “Chaucerian” text, a classification which Boffey notes is “rather hard to define” because it spans a wide variety of works and writers, each with their own interests and contexts.<sup>396</sup> The most glaring difference, perhaps, is the Scots dialect of *KQ*, a far cry from Chaucer’s London English.<sup>397</sup> Boffey suggests that the texts included in her edition of fifteenth-century dream visions (of which *KQ* is a part) may be understood as “Chaucerian” insofar as they contain “a degree of self-conscious Chaucerian reference”, either explicitly (as in the *KQ*) or implicitly indicated.<sup>398</sup> *KQ* in particular engages with many of the same themes, ideas, and literary techniques that characterise Chaucer’s own dream visions. It is told from the perspective of a poet-dreamer, dramatising both the moment of composition and the experience of dreaming, sometimes blurring the boundaries. Like *HF*, it adopts the motif of the philosophical flight through the heavenly spheres. The action of the dream transpires in a fantastical landscape populated by allegorical figures, as in *HF* and *PF*. Furthermore, as in *BD*, the dream is apparently inspired by heartache, a kind of inner discord. The dream and its narrative frames contain striking descriptions of sound, particularly birdsong, and avian imagery reminiscent of *PF*.

In spite of its many conventionalities, James’ use of sound and music departs from Chaucer’s in striking ways, belying the latter poet’s increased interest in selfhood, especially in relation to the internalisation of sounds: cognitively, emotionally, and spiritually. *KQ* thematises music as both philosophically and aesthetically significant, harmonising both views. The text makes emphatic use of musical tropes, like birdsong and bells, and pushes the boundary of the Neoplatonic ideal of heavenly music and its supposed divorce from audible or corporeal music. It is worth including Norton-Smith’s assessment of the poem’s eclectic style, also highlighted by Mooney and Arne, which “blend[s] different aspects of literary *topoi*” including “song, complaint, self-analysis, prayer [...] allegorical

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<sup>396</sup> Boffey, ‘Introduction’, p. 5.

<sup>397</sup> Boffey, ‘Introduction’, p. 6.

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*

excursus, dream adventure [...] into a medley, various yet whole”.<sup>399</sup> The semi-autobiographical quality of the text firmly integrates the discovery of inner harmony with waking life, thereby altering Chaucer’s propensity for abrupt endings. The narrative continues after the dream, providing an account of James’ reversal of fortune, and implicitly returning to the concern and time frame of the text’s opening, i.e., to the mature narrator as poet.

Furthermore, the poem’s temporal uniqueness among dream visions—that is, a retelling of a dream that had occurred long ago in the narrator’s youth—establishes a theme of discord or doubleness that pervades the narrative, bringing discrepancies between mortal and divine, real and dream, and past and present to bear on the central idea of the relative harmony or disharmony, between “indegest” youth (92) and the mature poet-narrator, with the laws of love and fortune. The text may be read as a rehearsal of the education of a soul, revealing and tuning the narrator into the universal order. The narrator’s personal responses to sounds and music are emphasised, and the duplicity of the self-reflexive commentary on youth from an adult perspective sheds light on differences in the personal experience of audible phenomena at different points in one’s life. Thus, recollection, as a performance of memories, can create a kind of polyphony whereby each voice is a different self. The text dramatises the mature James’ task of writing the dream, which as Boffey writes involves “the capacity of the creative imagination to reformulate and redirect images absorbed from other texts”.<sup>400</sup> Intertextuality is filtered through memory and imagination, resulting in a polyphony of auctoral voices, some of whom are mentioned in the final few lines. The story of James’ youth displays a “tuning” into the cosmic harmonies of love and fortune through types of music performed for the body and the soul.

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<sup>399</sup> John Norton-Smith, ‘Introduction’ to *James I of Scotland: The Kingis Quair* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971; reprinted Leiden: Brill, 1981), pp. xii-xiii. Cf. Mooney and Arn, *KQ and Other Prison Poems*, p. 17.

<sup>400</sup> Boffey, ‘Introduction’, p. 92;

The first major sonic event in the poem is the tolling of a bell for matins. This is preceded by a primarily conventional opening bearing much in common with *BD*: a sleepless protagonist, here referred to as “James”,<sup>401</sup> decides to calm his wandering thoughts about fortune and his own past by reading the *Consolation* (14-35). The bell as a general sonic symbol has been described previously as marking a shift between narrative frames in other dream visions. As Cherniss argues, sounds that punctuate the moment of awakening and are followed by a decision to record one’s dream are common in philosophical dream visions, such as the bell in *BD*, the roundel in *PF*, and the ballade in *TG*. In *KQ*, however, the dream is long past, having happened in the narrator’s youth.<sup>402</sup> James’s attribution of a voice encouraging him to write, saying, “Tell on, man, quhat the befell” (73-89), is also novel. For Cherniss, the delayed moment of writerly inspiration and the Christian function of the bell as a call to service portray the writer as a kind of visionary, and the poem as a “celebration of the Christian God”.<sup>403</sup> (One can also read James’s prayer to Mary and drawing of a cross at the beginning of his text in support of this.) However, James’s response to the sound is also emphatically self-reflective and psychological. He tries to reason with this unusual occurrence:

Thought I tho to my self: ‘Quhat may this be?  
 This is myn awin ymagynacioun;  
 It is no lyf that spekis unto me.  
 It is a bell, or that impressioun  
 Off my thocht causith this illusioun  
 That dooth me think so nicely in this wise.’ (78-83)

He blames a fault in his imagination for creating the illusion of a voice, a thought which he considers “nice”, or foolish. In the following line, he heeds the call, perhaps in spite of his rationalisation. His immediate reaction suggests that the sound has influenced him on a deeper, unconscious level, creating an impression on his soul that motivates him to act even if he consciously disregards it. If taken to be

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<sup>401</sup> The name is never used to refer to the character, but current scholarship generally accepts the autobiographical quality of the poem and has resulted in most scholars using “James”.

<sup>402</sup> Michael D. Cherniss, *Boethian Apocalypse: Studies in Middle English Vision Poetry* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1987), p. 195.

<sup>403</sup> Cherniss, p. 196.

a token of music in the poem (or at the very least a complex aural symbol), the bell occupies a liminal space between musical categories, the instrumental and percussive at a very basic level, yet seemingly performs a divine instruction that impresses upon James the narrator's soul in a way that may be described as working to restore his *musica humana*. One may also relate this moment of inspiration to the *Anticlaudianus*'s description of the liberal arts as heavenly gifts of reason and inspiration: the fiery heaven elevates and infuses the soul with "serene splendour" ["splendorque serenus"] (VII.316-322). James' immediate decision to write suggests that the sound has influenced him on a subconscious level, motivating him to act even if he consciously questions the sound as his "awin ymagynacioun", "no lyf that spekis", and an "illusion / That dooth me think so nicely [or foolishly] in this wise" (78-83). In fact, the sound is causally linked to his decision to write: "Sen I thus have ymagynit of this soun / And in my tyme more ink and paper spent / To lyte effect, I take conclusioun / Sym newe thing to write" (85-9).

The bell episode introduces a bond between human experience (rational and conscious) and the transcendent dream, which will be reaffirmed in parallel at the end of the poem with the message borne by the dove (1240-51). The sound also marks a transition from present experience to temporal slippages between youth and adulthood, as well as the suspension of mortal time during the dream's journey to Signifier (529). It instigates a poetic composition that, as Cherniss argues, will "bring past experience into the present time of the poem and [conclude] it as a coherent whole," transcending the Chaucerian and Boethian explications of dreamers dealing with past experience.<sup>404</sup> It creates an effect similar to lyric discontinuity, though the prevailing mood is one of self-reflection rather than untempered emotion. Furthermore, as Quinn argues, *KQ* is "an experiential re-presentation of an individual's contemplations; its focus will prove primarily psychological, rather than metaphysical."<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>404</sup> Ibid.

<sup>405</sup> William Quinn, 'Memory and the Matrix of Unity in *The Kingis Quair*', *The Chaucer Review*, 15/4 (1981), 332-355 (p. 335).

By framing the dream in an extended discussion of the narrator's life, the vision presents transcendent and instrumental music, but ultimately affirms the triumph of the self.

The bell is the first instance of a disembodied voice functioning as a *de facto* dream guide in the poem. Ethereal voices are heard at multiple points throughout the dream: when heavenly light shines through the imprisoned narrator's window (517-18), during the description of the inhabitants of Venus' palace (576); and in written form via the dove's message (1247), all of which James follows without question. The bell episode introduces a bond between human experience (rational and awake) and the transcendent dream, which will be reaffirmed in parallel at the end of the poem with the message borne by the dove. It also creates a relationship between "real" experience, characterised by sense perception in periods of wakefulness, and the interior experiences of imagination, recollection, and spirituality. Although the bell is formally separated from the narrative frame of the dream, it blurs the boundaries of both, calling attention to the unreliability of the mind on the verge of sleep, as well as suggesting that divinely inspired writing is a kind of dream state, a literary parallel to the prophetic or oracular dream.

*KQ* presents the issue of self-development as becoming attuned to divine order, and this is demonstrated in the dreamer's initially negative response to birdsong which the young, imprisoned "I-persona" James hears from his window. This music is primarily instrumental, but also indicative of birds as earthly signs of love, and *love*, in its divine form as Boethius states in the *Consolation*, is the force which binds the entire universe. Their song links the sublunary counterparts of love and music, i.e., erotic love and audible melody, to their superior forms. Similar to the beginning of the dream in *BD*, the nightingale's song is a physically rendered heavenly harmony which resounds to the point of making surrounding edifices shake:

The lytill swete nyghtingale, and song  
So loud and clere the ympnis consecrat  
Off lufis use, now soft, now lowd among,  
That all the gardyng and the wallis rong

Off thaire swete armony [...] (226-230)

The song in *BD* is part of the dream frame, but the song in *KQ* is still technically within the frame of the poet's past. His understanding of the song brings the text momentarily away from reality, and into the world of lyric narrative and dream poetry. The transcription of the song into human language is apparently James' invention, for he records "the text / Ryght of their song", rendered in a verse "copill" (230-1). Its instrumentality is emphasized, at least scribally, by the word "Cantus", written in the manuscript margin beside the song lyrics on fol. 195r. In isolation, the inserted lyric is relatively conventional, resembling the roundel at the end of *PF*:

Worschippe, ye that loveris bene, this May,  
For of your blisse the kalendis are begonne,  
And sing with us, "Away, winter, away!  
Cum, somer, cum, the swete sesoun and sonne!"  
Awake, for schame, that have your hevynnis wonne,  
And amorously lift up your hedis all!  
Thank Lufe that list yow to his merci call. (232-8)

However, the invitation for other lovers to partake in the performance of the song, which is also a prayer to Love and a celebration of spring, as Boffey writes, "seems designed to throw into relief the imprisoned spectator's solitude and inactivity", particularly as the following stanzas elaborate the extended metaphors of imprisonment and liberation, and which also "tie together the literal events of the narrative and its philosophical themes".<sup>406</sup> Prior to the song, one of the first images of nature is the narrator's bitter comparison of his imprisonment to the freedom of animals (183-5). The speaker's perceived injustice becomes more dramatic in response to the song, the significance of which he concludes, "It is nothing, trowe I, bot feynit chere, / And that men list to counterfeten chere" (251-2). The mid-line insertion of "trowe I" suggests his struggle to comprehend the reasons why birds, or any living being would devote oneself to love, and the disruption undermines the appearance of

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<sup>406</sup> Boffey, note to *KQ* 239-52.

confidence in his own rationale. His insecurity about being an outsider from the natural inclination to love leads him to question the power and benevolence of Love himself:

Eft wald I think: 'O Lord, quhat may this be,  
That Lufe is of so noble myght and kynde,  
Lufing his folk? And swich prosperitee  
Is it of him as we in bukis fynd?  
May he oure hertes setten and unbynd?  
Hath he upon oure hertis swich maistrye,  
Or all this is bot feynyt fantasye? (253-9)

James reasons that either Love is good, in which case he cannot identify any “offense” (262) he has committed in order to justify his own imprisonment (and the birds’ freedom), or Love is not good, though the question remains, “Quhat makis folk to jangill of him in veyne?” (266). Love is beyond his comprehension, defying his attempts to rationalise its workings. Despite this skepticism, James decides to become a devotee of this ambiguous deity, and his prayer seemingly results in a first-hand experience of intense love for a passing maiden. He soon realizes the error of his earlier criticisms, for celebratory songs of love are not “feynit” or “counterfeten”, and Love’s “maistrye” over his heart and body is no mere “feynyt fantasye”. He has fallen headlong into “lufis dance”, with dance alluding to the bodily nature of his desire.

In order to receive Love’s song, he must display genuine dedication and personally experience its pains: he must learn that true love is no mere “counterfeited” emotion. This idea receives comic treatment when the nightingale ignores his pleas for her musical blessing. Extremes of emotion are displayed, for in the space of a stanza he frustratedly hurls insults at the bird, calling it a “lytill wrecche” (393) before attempting to appeal to its better nature: “Allace, sen thou of resoun had felyng, / Now, swete bird, say ones to me ‘pepe’” (397-8). His final injunction, ‘Here is the tyme to syng, or ellis never’, conveys the finality and depth of his desperation (413). The bird, it seems, responds to his appeal in kind:

With that anon ryght sche toke up a sang,  
Quhare com anon mo birdis and alight.  
But than to here the birth was tham amang!  
Over that to, to see the swete sicht

Off hyr ymage, my spirit was so light  
Me thought I flawe for joy without arest,  
So were my wittis boundin all to fest. (421-7)

The music inspires James to experience love with greater intensity, moving him to ecstasy. Having come to feel the power of love and the interrelationship between instrumental and human music, he becomes a lyric poet. At this point he no longer translates the birdsong but composes new lines based on personal experience. It is precisely the opposite of counterfeit, or feigned, cheer. This eschews the issue in French lyric poetry of *chansonniers* composing pieces containing personal *sentement* or genuine feeling despite being written for a patron. James, with his wits enthralled and his heart soaring with joy, is both lover and lyricist, and his material spontaneously composed, “with humble hert entere” (433), “devoutly” (444), as to a “sanct” (342):

And to the notis of the Philomene  
Quhilkis sche sang, the ditee there I maid,  
Direct to hir that was my hertis quene,  
Withoutin quhom no songis may me glade; (428-31)  
[...]  
'Quhen sall your merci rew upon your man,  
Quhois service is yit uncouth unto yow,  
Sen quhen ye go, there is noght ellis than?  
Bot hert, quhere as the body may noght throu,  
Folow thy hevyn: quho suld be glad bot thou,  
That swich a gyde to folow has undertake?  
Were it throu hell, the way thou noght forsake!' (435-41)

The nightingale is no longer the “lytill wrecche” of earlier lines. On the contrary, this ecstasy seems a rite of passage, for the song for James is again transcribed as human language, and the prayer that his soul may accompany his body to the paradise of love is granted. Love has ennobled him and granted him access to this heaven through a literal understanding of love’s lyric language. As Boffey notes, the final couplet also connects fulfilment in love to literary and musical creativity.<sup>407</sup> He loves truly by hearing and singing love’s song himself, the lyric insertion expressing *sentement* personally, but also universally through the lyric register.

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<sup>407</sup> Boffey’s gloss of l. 431.



So far, the poem supports an interpretation of the significance of music in terms of Boethian *musica speculativa* and *practica*, through the trappings of lyric narrative. This point about understanding is a prevalent subject in the central part of *KQ*, which recounts James' dream of his ascent to the sphere of Signifier, where he meets Venus and Minerva, and his descent to earth to meet Fortune (1115-1204). As mentioned earlier in the poem, the young James is "of nature indegest", without the "rypenesse of reason" of his maturity (92; 108). Though he has heard and participated in love's songs, his physical imprisonment parallels his philosophical plight at the hands of fortune. His lack of attunement to the wider workings of universal harmony also reveals his inner discord. As he sings, his body may not follow his heart (438). He has learned about love through sensory experience, though he has yet to unveil the principles underlying love: the harmonious *musica mundana*. Reflective of this, the narration depicts his soul departing from his body. During his ascent upon a beam of light, another disembodied voice assures him, "I bring the confort and hele, be nought affrayde" (518), signalling a movement into a dream of the divine.

*The Dream: A Vision of Accord and Harmony*

The dream section of the poem is the primary substance of James' education in living in accordance with the *musica mundana* of love, personified as Venus, and reason, as Minerva. He is brought to Venus' palace, where he sees a long queue of lovers who have brought their complaints to be judged before the goddess, much like the tidings in *HF*. James is taught the true value of music by Venus herself. Venus's mourning causes a sympathetic inversion of universal order, represented by the absence of birdsong and the concealment of the stars (821-26). James must learn to live harmoniously according

to the laws of love and nature in order to gain his desire. Venus' list of deceitful lovers culminates in a musical metaphor of a fowler imitating birdsong to capture his unsuspecting prey:

For as the fouler quhislith in his throte,  
That in the busk for this desate is hid,  
And feynis mony a swete and strange note  
Diversely, to counterfete the brid,  
Till sche be fast lokin his net amyd:  
Ryght so the fatour, the false theif I say,  
With swete treoune oft wynnith thus his pray. (939-945)

The description values genuine *sentement* in musical composition, as opposed to “false”, insidious mimicry, or “counterfete”. Among the many supplicant lovers in the palace are mythological figures, great heroes, and even the poets who know the “science” of love, such as Ovid and Homer, who wrote about it “in thair swete layes” (589), conflating the performative aspect of ancient poetry with a more recent lyrical style of love poetry. Venus complains of people who have abased love by forgetting or neglecting her influences:

‘Say on than, quhare is becumbyn, for schame,  
The songis new, the fresch carolis and dance,  
The lusty lyf, the mony change of game,  
The fresche array, the lusty contenance,  
The besy awayte, the hertly observance  
That quhilum was amongis thame so ryf?  
Big tham repent in tyme and mend thair lyf. (841-7)

A series of adverbs and adjectives surround the potentiality of new songs of love: things are “lusty”, “fresch”, “besy”, and “observance”, “hertly”. Penitence requires a fully invested spirit and body. Love is a dance, and its prescribed laws or rhythms are meant to guide the motions of lovers and implicate them as performers and participants. Although the lessons he learns from Venus and Minerva are not songs in the same sense as Nature’s *complainte* in *DPN* or the didactic sermons in Martianus Capella’s book on harmony in the *Marriage*, Venus explains the importance of music and harmonious living through musical examples. The matter of wisdom is given a strong sense of personal relevance for James’s plight (even if, as a dreamer, his I-persona is a kind of allegorical everyman).

The dreamer's initial rejection of love is discordant with the laws of nature, and his claim to "the hardest hert that formyt hath Nature" (704) echoes this counterintuitive inclusion of all things natural *and* unnatural insofar as they have been created by Nature. The cuckoo and the crow are ultimately more natural than the deceptive fowler. The absence of birdsong (and sound of the fowler's whistling) is linked to abusive deception through feigned emotion. Venus' criticism of the dreamer is accompanied by a lament for man's dishonour of love. When she weeps, birdsong turns to mourning, and the lights in heaven retreat:

In thair nature the lytill birdis smale  
Styntith thair song and murnyth for that stound;  
And all the lightis in the hevin round  
Off my grevance have swich compacienc,  
That form the ground they hiden thair presence. (820-24)

By contrast, the renewal of love heralded by spring causes the "birdis on the twistis sing" (829). The harmony of birdsong is explicitly linked to the cosmic harmony of love, and human love is an integral part of the scheme. Audible and abstract song are both the cause and effect of love. Thus, Venus' final lesson to the dreamer is the importance of balance. Truth and happiness are rewarded to those who are "groundit ferm and stable / In Goddis law thy purpose to atteyne" (960-1).

Venus' instruction proves beneficial. When the dreamer's spirit returns to Earth, he recognizes the harmony of the universe in natural phenomena. A river, "clere and cold", makes "[a] maner soun, mellit with armony" (1062v). His vision has prepared him to see the cosmic order present in the sublunary realm. He also dreams of Lady Fortune, who reiterates the natural law of moderation. She takes pity on him, placing him at the top and explaining her turning of the wheel as a part of nature: "fro my quhele be rollit as a ball / For the nature of it is evermore / [...] Thus, quhen me likith, up or doune to fall" (1199-1200).

## *Awakening*

The dreamer's healing comes with a balancing of spirit and body. This is significant as dream visions often end abruptly with the dream, rarely elaborating more than a few lines about the protagonist continuing to read or write. James awakens when Fortune tugs on his ear, suggestive of the reintegration of James' soul and body. At first, he panics, still imprisoned and without proof that the dream has been anything beyond the result of his over-active imagination. He addresses himself from a detached, third person perspective:

O besy goste ay flickering to and fro,  
That never art in quiet nor in rest  
Til thou cum to that place that thou cam fro,  
Quhich is thy first and verray proper nest:  
From day to day so sore here artow drest (1205-9)

He clarifies his addressee to the reader, as if he is more in need of asserting with some certainty his own existence. He chides himself, saying he cannot escape his heartache, whether he is awake or dreaming. He believes his trouble to be even worse:

Tower my self all this mene I to loke:  
Though that my spirit vexit was tofore  
In swevyng, als sone as ever I woke  
By twenti fold it was in trouble more;  
Bethinking me with sighing hert and sore,  
That nan othir thingis bot dremes had,  
Nor sekirnes, my spirit with to glad. (1212-18)

He questions the validity of his dream: "Quhat lyf is this? Quhare hath my spirit be? / Is this of my forethoght impressioun, / Or is it from the hevin a visioun?" (1223-5). His dream of his meeting with Venus and Fortune has only taught his spirit harmony. When he awakens and his body and soul are reunited, his body too must be brought into harmony with nature.

The confirmation that he has had a divinely sent dream arrives in the form of a message delivered by a white dove, a motif surely intended to be reminiscent of God's kept promise of salvation to Noah (Genesis 8.11) and of the form of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. As James mulls

over his dream, “moving within his spirit of this sight”, the bird alights on his hand and turns to face him before giving him “in hert kalendis of confort” (1235vv). The bird holds a spray of “jorofflis”, or gillyflowers, the branches of which are inscribed in gold:

Awak, awak! I bring, lufar, I bring  
The newis glad that blisfull ben and sure  
Of thy confort. Now lauch and play and syng,  
That art besid so glad an aventure:  
For in the hevyn decretid is the cure.<sup>7</sup>  
And unto me the flouris fair present,  
With wyngis spred hir wayis furth sche went. (1247-53)

Contrary to the sore sighing of his heart, he is told to laugh and sing. There is a lyrical, celebratory tone in the message, complemented by the sudden “Awak, awak!” and the incantatory “I bring, lufar, I bring”, as well as “Now laugh and play and syng”. This functions effectively as a lyric insertion, encouraging further composition not only instrumentally but through laughter. At the same time, however, the compositor of the dove’s message seems to be the recurring disembodied voice—the mysterious divine basis of all joy and harmony. Though there may be music implicit in these lines, there is nothing overtly instrumental or formally musical about it. Perhaps there is no need for instrumental music, which educates the soul via the senses, for the meaning of the message is plain enough and is “hevyn decretid”. Whereas the dream had taught his spirit to become attuned to universal harmony, the physical embodiment of the message translates into internal harmony for the mind and body. James returns to the audible and corporeal music that had begun his education. He rejoices, his spiritual and bodily sustenance restored along with his faith in the goodness of the gods, and thanks the nightingale for singing “with so gud entent [...] of lufe the notis swete and small” (1325-6). The next few stanzas provide an account of his better fortune and success in love, and lead the back to the I-persona’s present day. His tale has described his maturation, using musical motifs to draw attention to the theme of concord, both within himself and in relation to underlying harmony of the universe. The song which he had originally demanded of the nightingale has been placed against ideas of hypocrisy and falsity in the dream, but as the story ends, which marks the simultaneous

completion of the story's composition, the song becomes the poet-narrator's own to sing and delight in as he pleases. The conclusion of the text may even be read as musically Boethian but philosophically *anti*-Boethian, in the sense that James recognises and seizes the opportunity given to him, assuming control, at least in part, of his own fate,<sup>408</sup> rather than accepting, as the dreamers of the *Consolation*, *BD*, *HF*, and *PF* appear to do, their situations as unchangeable.

In the ending, James contextualises his poem within the literary tradition of poets such as Gower and Chaucer. The text as a whole dramatises the mature James' task of writing his own history and his dream, which as Boffey indicates involves "the capacity of the creative imagination to reformulate and redirect images absorbed from other texts".<sup>409</sup> Even in the dream, poets who know the 'science' of love, such as Ovid and Homer, and who have written about it 'in thair swete layes', are counted among the supplicants within Venus' palace.<sup>410</sup> It seems that the greatest love poetry harmonises an appeal to the inner and outer ear. It attests to the performative nature of poetry and replicates to the processes of lyric inspiration and transmission. As a performance inspired by his auctores and in some ways surpassing their musicality in a much more all-encompassing fashion that unites Boethian and French aesthetic ideas, the self-described "litill tretisse" which James sends forth to be read is perhaps best viewed as a text which takes the idea of music to its extreme from speaking bells and singing birds, to adulthood and poetic inspiration, ensuring his music will continue to harmonise with the bodies and souls as well as the inner and outer ears of many audiences to come. In the footsteps of Gower and Chaucer (1352), he recommends his humble book "in lynis sevin" (1378), a reference to the rhyme royal stanza, seemingly reminding us that his own story is a type of natural music, set out in metre and in rhyme. With this book, he will commend their souls unto heaven.

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<sup>408</sup> I owe this reading to A.C. Spearing, through personal correspondence in August 2018 in response to an earlier form of this chapter.

<sup>409</sup> Boffey, 'Introduction', p. 92.

<sup>410</sup> Boffey, note to l. 589.

If medieval dream visions reveal a central attitude toward the significance of music in all its forms, it is, to revise Freud's idea, not so much that dream symbols form a protective barrier around the consciousness that must be broken down, but that dream visions, by demonstrating transcendental truths through the idea of music, allow dreamers to produce new, fresh narratives in waking life that express harmony.<sup>411</sup> *BD*, *HF*, and *PF* focus upon different themes related to music, sound, and voice in relation to personal issues experienced by the texts' respective dreamers. Intimations of the concordant love which binds the cosmos are gained from sonic dream symbols and literary styles and techniques that communicate directly to the soul and heal dreamers. *KQ* uses many musical themes that appear in Chaucer's dream poems and Neoplatonist writing, but draws the relationships between the "real" and the "mental"—dreams and reality, memory and present experience—more clearly than the others. The dream then extends beyond the realm of the mind, as James identifies and creates harmony in reality.

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<sup>411</sup> Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, V.c.

## UNDERSTANDING AND CONCEPTUALISING VISION IN MEDIEVAL ALLEGORY AND DREAM POETRY

This thesis has addressed thus far the use of musical and other sonic characteristics in dream poetry: from the philosophical context of Neoplatonist cosmic harmony, to the cultural and religious aspects of song, secular and sacred, to the development of musical theory and practice, including polyphonic song, lyric narratives, and lyric insertions. I have also touched on the affective nature of songs and sounds in relation to healing, communication, and meaning making. Of the senses, vision plays an equal if not superior part in medieval attitudes toward epistemology and ontology. With regard to dream poetry, the prominence of the two senses varies, though the centrality of sight, both corporeal and inward, is virtually inescapable. It is apparent not least in the terminology used to categorise dreams and literature about them, but also in the overlap of such terms as *visio*, *phantasia*, *phantasma*, and others in broader intellectual discourses of natural philosophy (specifically cognition and optics), contemplation, and mysticism. There are conceptual parallels, such as the duality of the senses and sensory phenomena (as corporeal or incorporeal, bodily or spiritual, mortal or divine), which are also accompanied by skepticism concerning human sensation. The theory of sensation as a process of movement and the importance of visual mediaries were highly influential and were the basis of other Aristotelian and medieval theories of natural phenomena, including the passage of sound through air.<sup>412</sup> However, music was not ascribed a mimetic or representational value in medieval thought, so an examination of the function of vision in thought and art is essential to understanding the relationship between art, perception, and truth in dream poetry.

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<sup>412</sup> Greti Dinkova-Bruun, et al., 'Introduction' to *The Dimensions of Colour: Robert Grosseteste's De Colore*, ed. and trans. Greti Dinkova-Bruun, et al. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2013), p. 22.



Philosophical, theological, and scientific thought adopted the Neoplatonic notion of vision as “the highest and noblest of all the senses” [“optimo praeclarissimoque sensuum omnium visu”] (Cal. 236), enabling mankind to contemplate things beyond the visible world. Neoplatonic and Aristotelian philosophy in the Middle Ages also shaped medieval models of cognition, which explain the way the mind receives, processes, and forms thought images, and conveys external sensory information to the soul. The eyes were viewed literally as portals to the soul, so the mechanics of corporeal and spiritual vision was a source of extensive and continuous interest across a range of intellectual disciplines, all of which, either directly or indirectly, are indebted to Greek philosophy. Calcidius’ translation and commentary on the *Timaeus* provided the basis for the organising principle of later medieval optics (that light is direct, reflected, or refracted) while synthesising Platonism with Galenic physiology.<sup>413</sup> Augustine also contributed to medieval theories of vision, particularly in the affinity between sight and love. Then, by the thirteenth century, Aristotelian theories of vision, via Arabic translations, entered western discourse and were established as part of the study of optics called *perspectiva*.<sup>414</sup> Developments of the theory of optical *species* fundamentally shaped the science of *perspectiva* in the later Middle Ages, and dream poetry, especially *Pearl*, appears to echo natural philosophical, theological, and mystical versions of the theory.

Two fundamental points about medieval attitudes toward vision stand out in relation to its treatment in philosophical allegories and dream poetry. The first concerns the subject-object relationship between a viewer and the object of sight. The method of vision (through the bodily or inner eye), the qualities of the object (whether it is natural, artistic, abstract, or imaginary), and intermediaries all have theoretical and symbolic implications for presentations of vision. In dream poetry, the experience of love, secular and sacred, is often expressed in intromissive terms, whereby

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<sup>413</sup> David C. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 89.

<sup>414</sup> Lindberg, *Theories of Vision*, p. 104.

visual *species*, as rays, affect soul by entering the eye. The symbols of Love's arrows, the gaze of the beloved, and divine illumination are treated in dream poetry as profoundly affecting the viewer's heart and soul through ocular penetration. The lover of *RR*, White in *BD*, and the *Pearl*-maiden are exemplary objects of spiritual and erotic love that transform their viewing subjects through affective sight.

Much of the expressive power of dream visions relies upon the communication of extraordinary and imaginary experience, often through vivid visualisation. The philosophical analogues of the dream vision tradition posit a close relationship between words and the imagination, suggesting allegory as the figurative literary mode of choice. Dream poets also followed the example of rhetoricians by using mimetic techniques such as *enargeia* and its subcategory, *ekphrasis*, to enhance the visuality of verbal descriptions.<sup>415</sup> In the *Etymologies (Etymologiae)* (c. 625), Isidore of Seville defines *enargeia* as “the performance of things acted out or as if they were acted out before our eyes” [“Energia est rerum gestarum aut quasi gestarum sub oculis inductio, de qua locuti iam sumus”] (II.xxi.33); it, like emphasis, “causes something to be understood beyond what one has said [to] elevate and adorn an oration” [“At contra orationem extollit et exornat energia tum Emphasis, quae plus quiddam quam dixerit intellegi facit”] (II.xx.4).<sup>416</sup> The definition of *ekphrasis*, originally the verbal description of work of figurative art, has been extended by literary critics to connote the self-conscious process of poetic representation. Dream visions also thematise the role of images in memory and creative recollection, and use both to generate imagined images in the mind of the audience. The influence of mnemonic techniques of visualisation explained by rhetoricians and religious contemplatives can also be seen in

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<sup>415</sup> For more on this, see Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>416</sup> Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi, *Etymologiarum sive Originum libri XX, LLT-A* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010); translation from Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, ed. and trans. Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, and J. A. Beach (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Citations include book, chapter, and paragraph.

the use of allegorical edifices or spatially conceived loci,<sup>417</sup> from the gardens and ivory tower of the *RR*, to the houses of Fame and Rumour in *HF*, to *Pearl's* vision of the New Jerusalem.

Although any variety of mimetic literature can conceivably be interpreted as dependent on cultural and intellectual ideas of vision and literary practice, such a reading is particularly illuminating for Middle English dream poetry and the philosophical allegories from which a wealth of their visual theory, themes, and poetic techniques are derived. Dream visions indicate the limits of human perception of truth, but they also portray the artist or poet as enacting a powerful role in manipulating perception. Dream visions dramatise the act of composition which requires recollection and imagination to communicate thoughts and memories seen in the mind's eye of the poet. Through the process of writing, the poet re-experiences the dream along with the audience. As a result, poets and artists are presented as new kinds of visionary, in search of artistic truth as much as (or even more than) spiritual truth. They are distinct from 'true' visionaries such as Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe: the dream visions identify their dreamers as poets first and foremost.

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<sup>417</sup> See Carruthers, *Craft*, p. 13.

Visual material in dream poetry becomes essential to spiritual edification because the soul cannot learn from abstracts alone, but requires images. As visions requiring interpretation, the most significant dreams are perhaps those worthy of being seen as a tool for contemplation, a product of it, or even a kind of contemplation in itself. An uneasy relationship between the inner and spiritual senses over the bodily ones is apparent in the differences between classical and medieval discourse. Corporeal vision and the other basic senses are fundamental to more sophisticated modes of cognition. This is attested by the Neoplatonic axiom that the purpose of sight (as well as the other senses) is to effect piety. The role of visual art presents certain issues. While Plato considered all images (mental, artistic, and natural) imperfect and therefore potentially misleading, and lowest in the hierarchy of being (*Republic* 509d), Aristotle differentiated between different kinds of images and considered them an essential part of cognition: “the soul never thinks without an image” (*On the Soul*, III.7, 431a16; *On Memory* 450a1).<sup>418</sup> Aristotelian mental images [“phantasmata”] are like paintings or wax impressions (*On Memory* 450a30-b11) and are the residue of sense impressions (*On Dreams* 460b28-461a1).<sup>419</sup> Furthermore, the essential existence, or “being” of a picture and a likeness are different, and a painting can be contemplated as either (*On Memory* 450b1-451a1). The highest kinds of intellection use abstract forms, not images (*On the Soul* III.5.430a10-26). This view was rejected by medieval philosophers and theologians, notably the scholastic philosopher Duns Scotus (fl. late thirteenth to early fourteenth century), who theorised that the intellect can use and rely upon *phantasmata*, and Hugh of St Victor, who argued for the necessity of “corporeal similitudes” for speculation of spiritual and invisible things.<sup>420</sup> It was also

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<sup>418</sup> Aristotle, *On the Soul*, trans. J. A. Smith, in *Works*, I, 641-692; *On Memory*, trans. J. I. Beare, in *Works*, I, 714-720.

<sup>419</sup> On the wider context, see Nigel J. T. Thomas, ‘Mental Imagery’, *SEP* (first published November 1997, substantive revision September 2014) <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mental-imagery>> [accessed 24 February 2019].

<sup>420</sup> John Marenbon, *Later Medieval Philosophy (1150-1350): An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), p. 166. Also see Ritva Palmén, *Richard of St. Victor’s Theory of Imagination* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 198-9 for a summary of medieval theories of similitudes.

common practice in monastic communities to use icons, whether physical objects or mental images, as foci for meditation.

Although Macrobius was not a contemplative writer in the traditional sense, he stressed the Platonic view of using the visible as a means of understanding the invisible, the abstract, and the eternal forms. For Macrobius, dreams provide the soul with veiled images or symbols [“*figurae*”] which are divested of their sensible qualities in order to reveal transcendental truth.<sup>421</sup> As Macrobius explains, sensory impressions can be stripped to their abstract forms, but proper understanding of the forms underlying reality can also bring one’s thought closer to the divine. Philosophers use symbolism, myths, and fables to discuss the realities underlying sensible things, and as Wetherbee indicates, *similitudines* and *exempla* are used indirectly to describe God and divine Wisdom in order to avoid impiety.<sup>422</sup> When discussing Plato’s explanation of the Good, Macrobius reasons that he draws a comparison to the sun because “of visible objects he found the sun most like it, and by using this as an illustration opened a way for his discourse to approach what was otherwise incomprehensible” [“*ei simillimum de visibilibus solem repperit, et per eius similitudinem viam sermoni suo attollendi se ad non comprehendenda patefecit*”] (*Commentary* I.2.15, Stahl 86).<sup>423</sup> It is acceptable to describe the soul and lesser gods such as Nature in fabulous terms, for Nature envelops herself in clothing intended to withhold the understanding of herself from the “uncouth senses of men” [“*vulgaribus hominum sensibus intellectum*”], preferring instead “to have her secrets handled by more prudent individuals through fabulous narratives” [“*ita a prudentibus arcana sua voluit per fabulosa tractari*”] (I.2.17).

Patristic writing inherited Neoplatonic ideas of sensible and intelligible levels of reality, the soul as a bridge between them, and enlightenment through the methods of transposition and self-

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<sup>421</sup> See General Introduction.

<sup>422</sup> Winthrop Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry in the Twelfth Century: The Literary Influence of the School of Chartres* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 38; Cf. Macrobius, *Commentary*, 1.2.14 (Stahl 86).

<sup>423</sup> For the origins of this idea, see Stahl’s footnote, p. 86, in his edition of the *Commentary*. He cites Plato’s *Republic*, 508a-509b along with Plotinus and Proclus.

reflection. These in turn emphasised that learning is essentially a devotional act, intended to bring oneself closer to God. Aquinas defended the importance of the imagination in learning: it is only once the imagination conjures a disembodied image (i.e., a thought) that the faculty of reason may reconstitute the image into an abstract form that is universal and understandable to the singular soul.<sup>424</sup> In the medieval university, the idealisation of abstracts was pervasive even at the basic levels of learning. As Chadwick argues, the *quadrivium* of arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy formed a foundation for such study with the purpose of “liberating the eye of the soul [...] from corporeality”.<sup>425</sup>

Augustine categorised types of vision in relation to levels of corporeality and spiritual love. In *De genesi ad litteram* (*On the Literal Meaning of Genesis*), he comments upon Paul’s vision of heaven in II Corinthians 12:2-4:

Ecce in hoc uno praecepto cum legitur: diliges proximum tuum tanquam te ipsum,<sup>426</sup> tria visionum genera occurrunt: unum per oculos, quibus ipsae litterae videntur, alterum per spiritum hominis, quo proximus et absens cogitatur, tertium per contuitum mentis, quo ipsa dilectio intellecta conspicitur.

When we read this one commandment, You shall love your neighbor as yourself, we experience three kinds of vision: one through the eyes, by which we see the letters; a second through the spirit, by which we think of our neighbor even when he is absent; and a third through an intuition of the mind, by which we see and understand love itself. (*De Genesi* 12.6.15.)

The first two types of vision are recurrent motifs in *BD*, *HF*, and *Pearl*. The connection between reading and seeing is affirmed, and seeing soon becomes experiencing. The third type is suggested in *Pearl*, but the dreamer’s human limitations are made clear by his ousting from the dream. Absence and loss are also underscored in all three visions, and while solutions are not offered, they show how recollection and imagination can reformulate one’s view of life and love. Klassen highlights this passage as part of Augustine’s profound shaping of medieval Christian thought with respect to a

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<sup>424</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *The Collected Works of St. Thomas Aquinas Online Edition: Aristotle’s De anima in the version of William of Moerbeke and the Commentary of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Kenelm Foster and Silvester Humphries (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1965; online edition Charlottesville, VA: IntelLex Corporation, 1993), book III, lectio 7, section 692.

<sup>425</sup> Chadwick, p. 73.

<sup>426</sup> This refers to Matthew 12:39.

tripartite view of vision.<sup>427</sup> This typology of vision and love may arguably be applied to philosophical allegory and dream vision as genres: allegorical symbols and veiled truths help one see that which is beyond the limits of normal human vision, revealing the unifying nature of love.

The importance of *visibilia*, whether inspired by images or words, is fundamental to the contemplative and didactic uses of allegory and dream poetry. Hugh of St Victor's twelfth-century adaptation of the late-fifth-century Pseudo-Dionysian definition of symbol conceives of it as something which moves *per visibilia ad invisibilia* (from visible to invisible): it is "a juxtaposition, that is, a joining together of visible forms set forth to demonstrate invisible things" ["collatio videlicet, id est coaptatio visibilium formarum ad demonstrationem rei invisibilis propositarum"].<sup>428</sup> The theory of symbols as illuminating the eye of the mind influenced the Neoplatonist allegories of Bernardus Silvestris and his followers, including Alan of Lille.<sup>429</sup> The corpus that emerged from these writers in turn had a substantial effect on the metaphorical, allegorical, symbolic, self-reflexive, and above all, visual, style of medieval dream poets.

Another human faculty that was viewed as necessary in the pursuit of truth (though ultimately insufficient to contemplate the divine), and was the subject of extensive debate across medieval intellectual culture, was reason. While reason was deemed the capacity which elevates the human above other creatures, it was also frequently considered an obstacle to higher contemplation. The struggle of apprehending and describing the ineffable and the sublime is of real concern. Different methods of challenging human understanding are discernible in a variety of intellectual traditions, different theological approaches to symbolism, and the use of *involucra* or *integumenta*, the "literary

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<sup>427</sup> Klassen, p. 5.

<sup>428</sup> Hugh of St Victor, *Commentariorum in hierarchiam coelestem S. Dionysii Areopagite*, III, PL, 175, 960d; translation from Steven Chase, *Angelic Wisdom: The Cherubim and the Grace of Contemplation in Richard of St. Victor* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), p. 55.

<sup>429</sup> Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry*, pp. 59-60.

conceit concealing inner meaning beneath a fabulous surface”, in universities, religious thought, and poetry.<sup>430</sup>

However, not all *visibilia* were viewed equally. The *integumenta* or icons of spiritual and intellectual contemplation had a degree of validating authority attached. Divinely sent dreams rely on belief, both of their truth and their particular interpretation. Augustine’s discussion at the beginning of *De videndo Deo* of the different uses of sight and their corresponding authoritative values is highlighted by Klassen as part of Chaucer’s contemporary intellectual climate: “things which are not present to our faculties are believed if the authority on which they are offered seems trustworthy” [“Creduntur ergo illa quae absunt a sensibus nostris, si videtur idoneum quod eis testimonium perhibetur”].<sup>431</sup> Augustine contextualised this alongside the distinction between the two paths of knowledge, seeing and believing, and of which the latter is superior.<sup>432</sup> A dream such as *HF* clearly raises issues of authority. Furthermore, as Augustine argues in *De Trinitate* (IX.11.16), corporeal eyesight generates likenesses of things seen in the mind, or phantasms in the memory. The role of fantasy is ambiguous, depending on context.

It is perhaps for this reason that the will is assigned a fundamental role in vision. In *De Trinitate* IX.6, Augustine uses vision to exemplify the trinitarian unity of God: there is sight of visible forms, the impressions these make on the mind, and will’s role in retaining and enacting judgment upon visible forms. Collette highlights the influence of Augustine’s placement of “the exercise of will [...] at the heart of the theology of vision as well as the psychology of sight” from the early Middle Ages

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<sup>430</sup> Chase, *Angelic Wisdom*, p. 60. On twelfth-century ideas of symbolic theology and typologies of symbols, see p. 59. For an outline of cataphatic, apophatic, and superlative theology, see Annika Sylén Lagerholm, *Pearl and Contemplative Writing* (Lund: Department of English, Lund University, 2005), pp. 130-131.

<sup>431</sup> ‘To Paulina [The Book of the Vision of God]’ [epistle 147], in *Saint Augustine: Letters*, vol III, trans. Wilfrid Parsons (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1985), 170-224; ‘Epistola 147: *De videndo Deo*’ in *S. Aurelii Augustini Opera Omnia*, PL 33: S. Aurelii Augustini, t. secundus, pars prior, pp. 705-39 (Paris: Gaume Fratres, 1836). Discussed in Klassen, p. 8.

<sup>432</sup> Klassen, pp. 7-8.



onward.<sup>433</sup> The will exercises a personal judgment of truth upon images of things corporeally sensed and imagined as “phantasies” (IX.6.9), so the extent to which an individual’s thought resembles higher truth depends on the visual faculty’s strength and clarity, or whether it is “shut off” in “darkness” [“a caelo perspicuo secludar”] (IX.6.32).<sup>434</sup> As the next chapter argues, the mourning dreamer in *BD*, paralleling Alycane and the Black Knight, is overtaken by fantasy, and appears to suffer from an impaired will as a result. Another passage from *De Trinitate* IX is illuminating in terms of the visual symbolism of *BD*. Augustine conceives of thought as involving a union of subject and object, the lover and beloved.<sup>435</sup>

Cum autem ad alios loquimur, uerbo intus manenti ministerium uocis adhibemus aut alicuius signi corporalis ut per quamdam commemorationem sensibilem tale aliquid fiat etiam in animo audientis quale de loquentis animo non recedit.

[I]n conversing with others we add the service of our voice or of some bodily sign to the word that remains within, in order to produce in the mind of the listener, by a kind of sensible remembrance, something similar to that which does not depart from the mind of the speaker (*De Trinitate*, IX.7.7-10)

In both *BD* and *Pearl*, conversation, visualisation, and recollection are dominant motifs. The main image of each ending, of the white castle and the sacrament respectively, are powerful metaphors for the visual memories that penetrate the dreamers’ deepest pains and redirect the will.

Allegory and dream poetry became a vehicle for synthesising material reasoning and the imagination with metaphysical conflicts in literature, using metaphor as an alternative to philosophy’s necessarily rational approach to truth, or at the very least, suggesting the possibility of poetry to contain truth.<sup>436</sup> Their poetic visuality also bypasses conventional reasoning by creating new worlds, characters,

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<sup>433</sup> Carolyn P. Collette, *Species, Phantasms, Images: Vision and Medieval Psychology in The Canterbury Tales* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001), p. 22.

<sup>434</sup> Augustine, *De Trinitate*, *LLT-A* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010); translation from Augustine, *On the Trinity*, ed. Gareth B. Matthews and trans. Stephen McKenna (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Citations include book, chapter, and line.

<sup>435</sup> Augustine considers specifically the role of the will in knowledge, while Aquinas focuses on the contemplative *intellectus*. On parallels with Aquinas, see Rowan Williams, *The Wound of Knowledge: Christian Spirituality from the New Testament to St John of the Cross* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1990), p. 125. Also see Klassen, p. 33 on Aquinas’ view of contemplation as a primarily intellectual activity in the *Summa theologiae*.

<sup>436</sup> Lynch, *High Medieval Dream Vision*, p. 15. Also see Theodore Silverstein, “The Fabulous Cosmogony of Bernardus Silvestris”, *Modern Philology*, 46 (1948), pp. 92-116, at p. 116.

and objects that can only be fully visualised by the imagination, and through visualisation, produce multivalent meanings that lose their resonance and complexity when described in non-poetic terms. Allegory thus takes on attributes belonging to the contemplative tradition. In *DPN*, Nature refers to the tear in her robe, where man should be depicted, as an integumental symbol (8.24). Wetherbee notes that Alan's usage of the term alludes to the use of *integumenta* in twelfth-century schools to denote "a myth or image that conceals a deeper philosophical, moral, or spiritual meaning."<sup>437</sup> Although she is sceptical of the possibility of poetry to contain truth, her physical appearance and mode of speech also depend upon the symbolic "integumental covering" ["integumentali involucro"] of allegorical and poetic description (8.32). Nature's robe is made integumental precisely by its richly visual, symbolic *ekphrasis*. Because they operate on symbolic, veiled, allegorical, and otherwise indirectly referential levels, it is possible to conceive of dream visions as *integumenta* visualised with the inner eye, to be contemplated by dreamers, dream interpreters, and literary audiences.

Middle English dream poetry radically departed from the loftier subject matter of philosophical allegories and allegorical personae in certain respects. Figures such as Nature, Fame, and Love play prominent roles in this poetry, though these personifications are livelier, and their didacticism less straightforward. Although Chaucer's dream poems continually suggest a more meaningful intelligible realm, its presence in his poetry is tantamount to just that: suggestion. Furthermore, all four poems express the difficulty of putting dreams into words and anxiety about errors of interpretation (as in *HF*) as well as throwing the privileged relationship between certain dreams and their higher meaning into some doubt. The narrator's reflection on the mundane inspiration of dreams early in *PF* encourages scepticism regarding the origin of the poem's central dream, perhaps undercutting the traditional choice of transcendent dreams as being worthiest of contemplation and seemingly placing different types of dreams onto equal footing, as well as

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<sup>437</sup> Wetherbee's note in his edition of *DPN*, p. 579.

suggesting the narrator's ensuing dream is one that has arisen naturally from his own psyche. On the other hand, the association of dreamers with fitting dreams (*PF* 99-105) could be read as an illustration of the microcosmic order, continuing the earlier allusions to cosmogony. The melody Scipio hears is "welle [...] of music and melodye / In this world here, and cause of armonye" (62-3). Africanus reveals the way to "hevene blisse" is to "Know thyself first immortal" to work toward "commune profit" (72-5). *HF*, for example, may be interpreted as a philosophical flight or *species* of contemplation, a thought experiment. *Pearl*, meanwhile, portrays the dreamer as accidentally receiving a degree of divine insight. Although he fails to ascend further on the ladder of contemplation, his dream nevertheless plays an important role in nourishing his spiritual growth.

Self-reflection was an important tenet of Neoplatonism as well as medieval devotional practice. It can be traced back to the Neoplatonist adaptation of the Delphic maxim, "know thyself". The Greek Neoplatonist Plotinus (204/5-270 CE), whose works were gathered by Porphyry, instructed those wishing to understand beauty through contemplation guided by the purer inner eye to look inward and improve themselves as one would create a beautiful statue,<sup>438</sup> carving away excess until "the divine glory of virtue shines out on you" and one's true, pure self is realised, which is transcendent: "nothing but true light [...] everywhere unmeasured" (I.6.9.7-16).<sup>439</sup> Corporeal images of beauty, in art or life, can help one understand sublime beauty. This is because the inner eye, "suddenly raised to intellectual vision [...] cannot perceive an object exceeding bright," so "the soul must therefore be first accustomed to contemplate fair studies," not of art, but of the good souls of "worthy men" (I.6.9.7). The myth of Pygmalion is included at a pivotal moment in *RR* arguably because its eponymous figure may be understood as proving his contemplation of and devotion to sublime beauty through a genuine, though necessarily unreciprocated, love of a statue, which is then

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<sup>438</sup> See Steel, 'Neoplatonism', in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, p. 548.

<sup>439</sup> From the parallel Greek and English edition of Plotinus, Ennead, *Volume I: Porphyry on Plotinus*, Ennead I, trans. A. H. Armstrong, Loeb Classical Library 440 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969).

rewarded through divine intervention (see discussion below). Proclus expressed the value of self-reflection underlying Neoplatonist ideas of perception and learning in terms of the “epistrophê”, in which the soul turns upon itself to gain an understanding of its intelligible and transcendental essence, with the goal of returning to its divine origin (I.6.9.7). Although Geoffrey in the Proem to Book I of *HF* may not understand the differences between the types of dreams or their gnomic messages, accepting “that oure flesh ne hath no might / To understonde hyt aright, / For hyt is warned to darkly” (49-51), he entreats “devyne vertu”—and not mere thought or invention—to “helpe me to shewe now / That in myn hed ymarked ys” (1101-3) and without the contrivances of “craft, but o sentence” (1099-1100). Africanus and Jove’s Eagle promise rewards, and Alceste grants the dreamer an opportunity to cast his tales of women in a new light so he may be a worthy disciple of Love.

The dream vision genre lends itself to exploration of the extent to which words can express what is seen by the bodily eye and the inner eye of thought and imagination. The following section outlines significant concepts and images that resonate with this theme in dream poetry. Light is one of the most pervasive visual symbols used in dream visions and other genres. It is central to the discussion of perception and learning in medieval optics, philosophy, and theology. This context is also a basis for considering the metaphorical treatment of specific optical topics such as illumination, visual rays, actualisation (the process by which things are made visible), and distortion. These ideas provide a basis for interpreting the complex and multifaceted significance of visual symbols, concepts, and literary techniques that are central to the ideas of vision and the visible in dream poetry.

It should also be kept in mind that dream visions and their analogues share the theme of creation, which in philosophical terms can be interpreted in conjunction with the ideas of being and becoming. The following sections will consider visual treatments of being and becoming in ancient Greek and Christian Neoplatonist cosmologies and their influence in dream vision analogues. Many contain emanationist theories of illumination and dramatise the dissemination of God’s spiritual light

throughout the universe and its presence in the creation of corporeal matter, living creatures, and human sensory and cognitive faculties. Another idea that has been touched on and is associated with divine illumination is movement. Aristotle describes all natural processes, from the creation of the universe to human sensation, as the result of “kinein”, a movement, affection, or change imposed on something from without (*Physics* 200b12-202b29), and considers sensation a type of movement because it is a “change of quality”, namely an impression of an experience upon the mind, creating a memory (*On the Soul* 416b33-4; 424a16-24).<sup>440</sup> In this passage, he explains memory in terms of the likeness (an idea or image) left on the mind as an impression of a ring made in hot wax: the wax retains the form but no other intrinsic properties of the ring. The theory of change as the result of movement is fundamental to the experiences portrayed in dream visions, as well as the accounts of divine creation in philosophical allegories.

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<sup>440</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye, in *Works*, I, 315-446.

The allegories which influenced the Middle English dream vision most provided a model for the use of visual theory, including *perspectiva*, in a literary context. Akbari argues that “developments in the history of optics are echoed in contemporary literature”, at times appearing “to truly ‘respond’ to changes in scientific theory” or appropriating these ideas “in order to provide the framework for a new, distinctive way of situating the subject in the world.”<sup>441</sup> In this chapter, the *Cosmographia*, *DPN*, *Anticlaudianus*, and *RR* are considered in relation to the philosophical, theological, and mystical contexts of their respective treatments of vision. What emerges is a shared discourse of visual symbolism, poetic techniques, and literary figures. These works, as the chapter on musical theory has shown, reveal a shift in focus from the divine macrocosm to the human microcosm, and therefore range from the creation of the visible cosmos from invisible forms, light as a dominant image of the transition from incorporeal to corporeal matter, to human vision, through the bodily eye and the inner eye of the soul, in self-reflection, contemplation, imagination, and illumination.

As with music, there was a theoretical hierarchy of types of vision and *visibilia*. A conceptual parallel may be drawn between that which can be seen with the inner or outer eye and the difference between mathematical and sonorous music. Types of vision were also characterised by level of directness, which relates to clarity. In the *Glosae super Platonem* of William of Conches (1080-c. 1154), an essential Neoplatonic textbook for the Chartres School,<sup>442</sup> a discussion of dreams is followed by three categories of vision: direct [“contuitio”], reflected [“intuitio”], and refracted [“detuitio”].<sup>443</sup> It is close to the typology in Calcidius’ *Commentary*, which calls them “phasis”, “emphasis”, and

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<sup>441</sup> Suzanne Conklin Akbari, *Seeing Through the Veil: Optical Theory and Medieval Allegory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 43.

<sup>442</sup> See Akbari, *Seeing Through the Veil*, p. 60.

<sup>443</sup> Translations of these terms are from Akbari, *Seeing Through the Veil*, p. 60. See Guillelmus de Conchis [William of Conches], *Glosae super Platonem*, *LLT-A* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), liber II, cap 142, ll. 3-6.

“paraphrasis” [“Idem aiunt videre nos vel tuitione, quam phasin vocant, vel intuitione, quam emphasin appellant, vel detuitione, quam paraphasin nominant”] (239). It is easy to see how the etymology of these terms may be applied to other conceptual frameworks including thought and writing, and how accounts of human visual experience may lend themselves to exegesis or allegorical interpretation. Optics is much more than a physiological science. Vision, corporeal and incorporeal, is the primary means by which humans gain knowledge of themselves as well as the physical and spiritual universe: perception and imagination are impossible without images. The ability of words to conjure images for the inner eye of the mind is also central to the *dulce et utile* ideal of poetry and rhetoric. Furthermore, because dreams are mentally or spiritually materialized *phantasmata*, vision and visual motifs in dream poetry are rarely merely corporeal. The organizational principles of vision are directed at the inner eye, addressing more than the role of external and internal vision, including literature, in the mental and spiritual development of dreamers and audiences. What emerges is a theme of learning to see, to internalize, and to communicate what is seen both clearly and truthfully, blurring the line between dreamer and poet, and placing their quest as resembling a form of spiritual contemplation.

Reflection and refraction, the types of vision involving at least one intermediary that can profoundly affect how something is seen, were portrayed allegorically. Mirrors and other reflective surfaces such as water and crystal are abundant in allegory, as are transparent or opaque materials like glass and ice. These references draw upon Biblical symbolism (particularly the Pauline glass of I and II Corinthians, discussed below) and contemporary philosophy. Imperfect reflection, both as a hindrance and a tool for enhanced vision, is also thematized in dream vision analogues. Poets display an interest in contemporary optics through explicit references to theories of *perspectiva* or emphasis on objects which distort sight by means of clarifying or obscuring the path between seer and the thing seen. As will be discussed, the Perilous Mirror of *RR* represents the moral dangers of limited sight and is contrasted with the carbuncle, which radiates divine light, making the earlier mirror appear dark and

murky in comparison. Ideas of light and darkness, clear and hindered sight also have secular and spiritual connotations. Reflective surfaces of mirrors or gems, spiritually or physically lustrous objects, and materials of varying transparencies (clear or stained glass, water, ice, and air) are powerful symbols that set a dreamer's understanding and will into motion. Refraction, the phenomenon whereby an actualizing medium makes the invisible visible, is an especially salient metaphor for emanationist cosmology (in which the physical universe is created from divine light) as well as enlightenment.



## *Light Symbolism*

The significance of light must be considered in two primary and interrelated ways: as a sensible phenomenon, and as a divine, transcendental, and in some views, abstract, force. Both interpretations are rooted in antique philosophy and early Christianity and remained commonplace in the Middle Ages. It is a powerful and complex idea, central to optical science and theology, which prompts discussion about different types of vision, the relationship between the bodily and the spiritual, mortal and divine, and sensory and intellectual. Light enables visibility of both material forms or divine ideas, and for this reason is associated in many texts with truth, which can be clarified or obscured depending on the human seer's virtue or level of enlightenment, often imagined in spiritual contexts as one's acceptance of light into the eye and the soul. Theories of light also provide a foundation for understanding the three types of vision and other optical properties, such as brightness and colour, in literal and transcendental ways. Scholastic and theological theories of vision and light (and rational and symbolic approaches, respectively) are increasingly linked in twelfth-century theology and philosophical allegory.<sup>444</sup> Both are indebted to Aristotelian and Neoplatonist philosophy. From this perspective it is easier for us to understand vision in a more historically sensitive way: vision opens the human body and the soul to the outside world, and the physical, emotional, and spiritual effects of seeing can be substantial.

The Aristotelian theory of optical mediaries as enabling visibility informed the literary treatment of the affective gaze. Aristotle explains that seeing is due to a change in perception enabled by an intermediary between the viewer and object of sight (*On the Soul* 419a10-15). Light is essential to actualisation, the "movement" ["*kinein*"] whereby the potentially visible qualities of objects, such as form and colour, are made visible (418a-b). The theological use of light as a metaphor for divine

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<sup>444</sup> Wetherbee's *Platonism and Poetry* surveys this in depth.

grace, wisdom, and goodness, and the elevation of the human soul through divine illumination provides a spiritual parallel to the explanation of physical change as movement. In the *Cosmographia*, Bernardus relates the trinitarian light at the centre of the universe, which is visible, to man's ability to view the stars:

Sol, oculus mundi, quantum communibus astris  
praeminet, et caelum vendicat usque suum,  
non aliter sensus alios obscurat honore  
visus, et in solo lumine, totus homo est.  
Quaerenti Empedocles quid viveret, inquit: "ut astra  
inspiciam; caelum subtrahe—nullus ero."

Just as the sun, the world's eye, is superior to its companion stars and claims as its own all below the heavens, likewise the sight overshadows the other senses in glory, and in their light alone the whole man is expressed. To one who asked why he was alive, Empedocles replied, "That I may behold the stars; deny me the heavens—I will be nothing." (*Microcosmus* 14.41-6)

Bernardus' use of Empedocles to affirm the indebtedness of man to the heavens is thoroughly Platonic. It relates spiritual enrichment and physical eyesight. In philosophical allegories, illumination is often an explicitly Christian symbol of holiness, wisdom, and perfection. Divine beings radiate their luminescence through creation. Philosophy, Nature, Love, and the *Pearl*-maiden can be viewed as didactic mediaries who make spiritual mysteries understandable to humans.

Although medieval commentators would dispute the details of Aristotelian optics, especially in defining colour, and the popularity of intromissive and extromissive theories would oscillate over time, sensation as a process of movement and the importance of visual mediaries were highly influential and provided an important conceptual (and literary) framework.<sup>445</sup> The nature of light was also of more immediate concern to scientists, philosophers, and theologians: there were moral and practical implications for whether colour was to be understood as integral to light, and thus sharing its holy characteristics, or as a separate material substance to be ousted from worship.<sup>446</sup> Meanings attributed to different hues also varied according to devotional, physiological, or artisanal context,

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<sup>445</sup> Dinkova-Bruun, et al., *Dimensions of Colour*, p. 22.

<sup>446</sup> These are Augustine's and Bernard of Clairvaux's respective views. Cited in C. M. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 155.

among others. The vision of the heavenly Jerusalem in Revelation (21:9-27), the twelve jewels of the Tabernacle, and the four colours of the garments worn by High Priests of the Temple provided models for the use and interpretation of colour in ecclesiastical contexts and for lapidaries (a motif adopted by Alan of Lille).<sup>447</sup> Other significations had been longer established. The association of the colour white with purity and black with misfortune can be traced back to antiquity, while added Christian resonances were preserved in hagiographic descriptions of the white, radiant bodies and clothing of celestial beings and saints.<sup>448</sup>

The use of light symbolism in philosophical allegories and later dream visions was therefore informed by natural philosophical and religious thought. Christian translations, commentaries, and interpretations of Greek philosophy following Calcidius, plus the vastly important transmission of Neoplatonism in patristic writing, resulted in poetic treatments of visual ideas that embraced both theoretical traditions. The idea of human understanding as reliant upon divine illumination has a strong Neoplatonic resonance and was easily harmonised with Christian cosmogony. An understanding of God as enabler or illuminator of the human active intellect allowed for the possibility of mortal wisdom. The senses alone are insufficient and active intellect is required in order to separate sensible images from the abstract forms, or intelligible *species*, that inform the intellect.<sup>449</sup> While Alexander of Hales and Robert Grosseteste were among such theorists who ascribed divine power to this human faculty, interpretations of Aristotelian philosophy based upon Averroes' commentaries, "current among arts masters between about 1225 and 1250" (but not Aquinas and his contemporaries) posited the human mind as containing its own potential and active intellects.<sup>450</sup>

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<sup>447</sup> See Woolgar, *Senses in Late Medieval England*, p. 155 and p. 311 (89n) for further reading.

<sup>448</sup> Woolgar, p. 162.

<sup>449</sup> Marenbon, pp. 116-7.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid.

Other Neoplatonist points were more easily integrated with Christian thought. Henry of Ghent’s illuminationist account of contemplation involves stripping the sensible aspects of a perceived image (a phantasm) down to its essential idea by the light of the active intellect.<sup>451</sup> Near the opening of the Pseudo-Dionysian *Celestial Hierarchy*, Christ is imagined in terms of luminescence, and the contemplative ascent is described anagogically. Jesus is “the Light of the Father”, and, alluding to John 1:9, the “true light enlightening every man coming into the world,” “through whom we have obtained access” to the Father, the source of all light [“[i]gitur Ihesum inuocantes paternum lumen, quod est quod uerum, quod illuminat omnem hominem uenientem in mundum, per quem ad principem luminis Patrem adduccionem habuimus, ad sacratissimorum eloquiorum a patribus traditas illuminaciones sicut possibile”] (I, 2, 121a-b; Grosseteste I, 2, 1-7.<sup>452</sup> This light allows humans to know the heavenly hierarchy through “symbols” [“symbolis”] (I, 2, 121b; Grosseteste I, 2, 9) “but we need to rise from this outpouring of illumination so as to come to the simple ray of Light itself” [“inmaterialibus et non tremantibus intellectus oculis intus suscipientes rursus ex ipsa ad simplicem ipsius extendamur radium”] (I, 2, 121b; Grosseteste I, 2, 9-11). This simple ray “works itself outward to multiplicity and proceeds outside of itself [...] to lift upward and to unify those beings for which it has a providential responsibility” and yet remains “inherently stable and it is forever one with its own unchanging identity” [“multiplicatus et procedens et manet intra se ipsum sicut fas est respicientes analogice ipsius extendit et unificat secundum simpliciatuam ipsius unicionem”] (I, 2, 121b; Grosseteste I, 3, 3-6). Furthermore, this light enlightens mortals “by being upliftingly concealed in a variety of sacred veils which the Providence of the Father adapts to our nature as human beings” [“[e]tenim neque possibile

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<sup>451</sup> Marenbon, p. 146.

<sup>452</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, in *Pseudo-Dionysius, The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid, ed. Paul Rorem, et al. (London: SPCK, 1987). Citations are by chapter and section. Latin is from Grosseteste’s translation and commentary (c. 1239-41/2): Roberti Grosseteste episcopi Lincolnensis, *Versio Caelestis hierarchiae Pseudo-Dionysii Areopagitae: cum scholiis ex Graeco sumptis necnon commentariis notulisque eiusdem Lincolnensis*, ed. Declan Anthony Lawell, James McEvoy, and James Stanley McQuade (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015). Eriugena also translated it into Latin c. 838 but is less faithful to the original text.

aliter nobis supersplendere thearchicum radium nisi uarietate sacrorum uelaminum anagogice circumuelatum”] (2, 121b-c; Grosseteste I, 3.3-4, 7-9). Lastly, “[m]aterial lights [i.e., sensible phenomena] are images of the outpouring of an immaterial gift of light” [“inmaterialis luminis dacionis ymaginem materialia lumina”] (2, 121d; Grosseteste I, 4, 12-13). It is through apprehension of the visible that the contemplative individual can ascend to the level of the invisible source of light.

The *Celestial Hierarchy* was the most commented Pseudo-Dionysian treatise in the Middle Ages, and its method of interpreting perceptible symbols was a major influence upon medieval Latin theological literature, particularly Eriugena’s work.<sup>453</sup> A clear parallel, whether a direct or partial result of this attitude toward symbols, may be drawn with the interpretation of dream symbols and allegory. These frameworks were foundational to the Christianised Neoplatonism of medieval allegorists. The idea of veiled images in Macrobius’ *Commentary* is also compatible with and central to the framework underlying medieval concepts of worship, understanding, communication, and symbolism. A link may be drawn to the Johannine Logos (John 1:1) as well. As Klassen indicates, John 1:1, “[i]n the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”, focuses on the primacy of knowledge:

*Logos*, a rich concept signifying not only word but also the idea of a message, a conversation, the settlement of an account, a book, or Divine Reason, not to mention Christ, has come down to earth but humanity has not understood it. The idea collocated with *logos* is light: ‘And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it’ (Jn 1:5).<sup>454</sup>

Philosophical allegories that focus on postlapsarian man, such as *DPN* and the *Consolation*, depict allegorical divinities as saving mankind by disseminating their wisdom. Having lost the closeness to God available in the Garden of Eden, postlapsarian man lives in a world in which God is concealed.<sup>455</sup>

As in I and II Corinthians, the impairments of mortal vision are healed with salvation. In *The Divine*

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<sup>453</sup> Paul Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to Their Influence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 73-4; 77-83.

<sup>454</sup> Norman Klassen, *Chaucer on Love, Knowledge and Sight* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995), p. 3.

<sup>455</sup> Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry*, p. 222.

*Names*, ascribed to Pseudo-Dionysius, the corrupted image of God within men's souls is restored by the uplifting and illuminating power of the primary Source (3, 589b-c).<sup>456</sup> Mortals depend on the symbols and analogies of divine scripture which allow one to leave behind human intelligence and speech to proceed towards the transcendent ray (4, 592c-593a). This ray appears in the *Cosmographia* alongside other theological and philosophical images of light.

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<sup>456</sup> Grosseteste also translated *De divinis nominibus* into Latin (c. 1235). See *De divinis nominibus*, LLT-A (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), revised version, based on the text of *Dionysiaca: Recueil donnant l'ensemble des trad. latines des ouvrages attribués au Denys de l'Aréopage: et synopse marquant la valeur de citations presque innombrables*, ed. Philippe Chevallier, et al. (Brussels: Desclée de Brouwer, 1937-1951)).

## *Light and Visibilia in the Cosmographia*

The concern with salvation through illumination expressed in medieval Christian Neoplatonist thought produced a wealth of literary discourse devoted to the creation and salvation of mankind. One of the most influential poetic dramatizations of the creation of the universe in terms of the transformation of divine light into sensible matter and corporeal beings is the *Cosmographia*, an exemplary Christian Neoplatonist allegory infused with Greek philosophical terms. The following discussion highlights how philosophical allegories present and develop the related metaphors of divine light and creation, and in postlapsarian allegories, the tension between natural divine creation, and human sexual and artistic creation.

Bernardus synthesised a range of contemporary philosophy, theology, and poetic exempla such as Boethius' *Consolation* and Macrobius' *Commentary* into an allegory that is both intellectually rigorous and innovative in its poetic treatment of the *Timaeus*. As Stahl writes, it “represents the first attempt by a medieval poet, a *modernus*, to assess and extend the classical tradition on a really ambitious scale” and “reflects nothing less than the attempt to create a new poetic world, taking Platonic cosmology with its neo-Platonic accretions as a model, but at the same time keeping all of this continually in perspective, using it as a foil to the presentation of a larger view of reality.”<sup>457</sup> He used light imagery primarily to represent in an emanationist manner the transformation of divine ideas into intelligible matter. Noys, the most superior enactor of divine will below God, is described as “the fountain of light, seedbed of life, a good born of divine goodness, that fullness of knowledge which is called the Mind of the Most High” [“Erat fons luminis, seminarium vitae, bonum boitatis divinae, plentitudo scientiae quae Mens Altissimi nominatur”] (*Megacosmus* 2.13). She represents the supreme

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<sup>457</sup> Winthrop Wetherbee, ‘Introduction’ to *The Cosmographia of Bernardus Silvestris*, trans. Winthrop Wetherbee (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), pp. 52, 58.

intellect, containing all knowledge and perfect vision, for she contains “the images of unfailing life, the eternal ideas, the intelligible universe” [“vitae viventis imagines, notiones aeternae, mundus intelligibilis”] and she contains “predetermined knowledge of all things [...] as if in a clearer glass” [“rerum cognition praefinita [...] in tesiore speculo”] (*Megacosmus* 2.13). Bernardus traces the dissemination of divine light from the fully intellectual Noys to the world-soul, Endelechia, who represents the marriage of matter and form: she is also a pure fountain of light, spherical in appearance, though only perceivable by the intellect (Ibid.). Because her appearance is perfect and numerically harmonious, it confounds and deceives the viewer “as if by a kind of magic as to its true aspect [...] beyond the reach of scrutiny” [“quasi praestigio veram imaginem fraudaret, non erat in minibus inspectantis”] (II.14). In the final book of the *Megacosmus*, Bernardus explains how the *genii* transfer divine will into material being: Noys informs Endelechia with images of the “eternal forms” [“gestat imaginum”] of divine will, who in turn impresses them upon Nature (binding bodies and souls), while Imarmene infuses them with the natural temporal order (*Megacosmus* 4.13). Together they function as a cosmic assembly line along the Chain of Being.<sup>458</sup> The term *entelecheia* has Aristotelian and Platonic resonances. Bernardus personifies it as one of the gods that brings divine thought into being, and the process is visualised according to an emanationist theory of light. Marenbon indicates Aristotle’s parallel application of the term to potential and actual visibility, sound and smell, and intellect (cf. *On the Soul*, 417a22-b1; 418a31-b31).<sup>459</sup> The definition of *entelecheia* in Calcidius’ *Commentary on the Timaeus* is more in line with Aristotle’s, which pertains to the context of bodies and sense perception, than that in Plato’s *Timaeus* 33, as Taylor indicates.<sup>460</sup> Bernardus’ goddess Endelechia appears to derive from the Aristotelian definition, particularly as a personified crafter of the human soul.

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<sup>458</sup> Homer’s “golden chain” [“aureae [...] catenae”] is mentioned in *Microcosmus* 7.1. It is also described here as an “umbilicus”.

<sup>459</sup> Marenbon, p. 100.

<sup>460</sup> Jerome Taylor, ‘Introduction’ to *The Didascalicon of Hugh of Saint Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts*, trans. Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 26. For further note on the background and application of the term in the Middle Ages, see p. 178n7.



The journey through the created universe in the second part of Bernardus' allegory, devoted to the *Microcosmus* and the creation of mankind, elaborates on the metaphor of divine light in relation to the Chain of Being. The outermost realm of the universe to which Noys and Urania travel as part of their task of creating human life is God's realm of pure, incorporeal light (*Microcosmus* 5.1). Bernardus oscillates between theological and Neoplatonic registers. In *Megacosmus* he describes a "radiant splendor" ["splendor radiatus"] that emerges from this "inaccessible light" ["luce inaccessibili"]: "I know not whether to call it an 'image' or a 'face,' inscribed with the image of the Father. This is the wisdom of God" ["imago nescio dicam an vultus, patris imagine consignatus. Hic est Dei sapientia"] (*Megacosmus* 4.5), while the above description pertains to the infinite "radiant splendor" ["splendor [...] radiatus"] of the realm of "Tugaton, the supreme divinity" ["Tugaton suprema divinitas"] (*Microcosmus* 5.3). The light of Tugaton's sphere is an allegorical image of the Trinity (*Microcosmus* 5.3).<sup>461</sup> The account of divine brilliance which confounds corporeal vision (and is nevertheless evoked in sensible terms) foreshadows the limitations of mortal vision while also highlighting the nature of human faith and contemplation as a confrontation with obscuring darkness in order to see inwardly the light beyond it. Traces of the Macrobian description of Nature as veiling her secrets to the ignorant or uninitiated are detectable in the image of darkness clothing eternal brilliance: "[t]his inaccessible light strikes the eyes of the beholder and confounds his vision, so that since one light shields itself from another, you may perceive the splendor producing of itself a darkness" ["[e]a igitur lux inaccessibilis intendit reverberat oculos, aciem praeconfundit, ut, quia lumen se defendit a lumine, splendorem ex se videas caliginem peperisse"] (*Microcosmus* 5.3). The description then evokes the trifold unity of the Trinity: "[t]hese radiances, uniform and identical in brilliance, when they had together made all things bright, reabsorbed themselves again into the well of light which was their source" ["[q]ui quidem radii, uniformes et claritatis parilitate consimiles, cum

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<sup>461</sup> Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry*, p. 198.

omnia collustrassent, se rursus sui fontis liquoribus admiscebant”] (Ibid.). The paradoxical generation of darkness from brilliance may have influenced Alan of Lille’s poetic treatment of negative theology in the account of Nature’s apostrophe and the disintegration of her reason and psyche in the *Anticlaudianus*, described below.

The *Cosmographia* is a pre-lapsarian narrative, although it sometimes alludes to the Fall insofar as mankind is a likeness of the divine ideal. The text’s primary interest is in the creation of the universe and an exploration of the Neoplatonic and Christian theme of creation as the physical embodiment of divine intellect. Bernardus expresses the relevance of divine and impenetrable light to the human sphere. The sun is a symbol of God, the mind and eye of the universe, as well as its brightest light, which radiates upon all of creation (*Microcosmus* 5.11). The endowment of the human soul with light enables mortals to mirror and reciprocate their relationship with the creator. Urania’s journey to the realm of Physis suggests the endowment of human learning with divine light. Physis sees Urania by a ray of light and a reflection in a spring while dreaming up the composition of man in an Edenic garden beside her daughters, Theory and Practice (*Microcosmus* 9.6-8). The light which travels throughout the heavens provides the inspiration and guidance for the creative *genii*, and their work reflects their superior divine exemplars as a result.

The significance of divine light is also evoked on a physiological level. Mankind is modelled in body and soul upon the intellectual universe, rendering him superior to other living beings (*Microcosmus* 12.11-16). The purpose of sight, as mentioned above, is worship, and the form and function of the human eye replicate the sun’s motion and brightness (*Microcosmus* 14.41-9). Human vision is a harmonisation of corporeal and incorporeal qualities and movements (*Microcosmus* 14.13-20). Human sight, however, is imperfect. It is drawn to light but does not have continuous access to it. The above passage continues: “it does not perceive all things with the same clarity”, fixing “most clearly upon things which are bright and most like itself. [...] As splendor is at home with splendor,

so is light with light; in shadow and darkness sight falls idle” [“Ilius interdum languet, abundat opus. / Purius alba capit propriaeque simillima formae, [...] Splendor splendori, lucique domestica lux est; / in noctem et tenebras oia visus agit”] (*Microcosmus* 14.22-3, 25-6). Darkness is associated with ignorance and disorder. Without light, the purpose of vision, and by extension, of mankind itself, is lost. Knowledge is to be soberly pursued, with the aid of light: “The unseeing hand spoils its work, the foot strays drunkenly, when they perform their tasks in darkness, without light” [“Caeca manus detractat opus, pes ebrius errat, / quando opus in tenebris et sine luce movent”](14.47-8). Human dignity is maintained and refined by the aid of illumination, which brings one closer to the ideal. Darkness, however, prevents such development and the work of the soul remains hindered by the body, which stumbles in darkness, and its earthly desires.

Bernardus’ use of light in the *Cosmographia* is always indicative of its divine symbolism. The philosophical allegories of Alan of Lille continue the association of light with divinity and reflect his indebtedness to the intellectual ideas and literary form of the *Cosmographia*. (A minor work, Alan’s “Sermon on the Intelligible Sphere” is most reminiscent of traditional Neoplatonic cosmology, reflecting his theoretical influences.) In *DPN* and the *Anticlaudianus*, Alan uses the devices of *enargeia* and *ekphrasis* to describe the visual appearances of characters and their clothing—more like Martianus than Bernardus. He also emphasises the visual theme and content of philosophical allegory through *enargeia* and *ekphrasis*, giving descriptions of physical objects, clothing, and scenery anthropocentric meaning. The new focus on postlapsarian man also dramatises mankind’s salvation through symbolic illumination.

*Divine and Mortal Art in the Works of Alan of Lille*

Alan of Lille's poetry had a profound effect not only on the presentation of light and vision in dream poetry but on the use of poetry as a vehicle for complex intellectual discourse more generally. *DPN*, believed to have been written in the 1160s at the latest, and the *Anticlaudianus*, ascribed to the early 1180s, are emblematic of what Wetherbee calls the twelfth-century "flowering of classically informed Latin poetry" in response to the prominence of literature and philosophy in the cathedral schools.<sup>462</sup> Alan's two longer works continued the tradition of his greatest exemplars, the philosophical poets Bernardus, Boethius, and Martianus Capella, while his own influence was substantial: *DPN* and *Anticlaudianus* became essential texts for schools and standard references in twelfth- and thirteenth-century *artes poeticae*.<sup>463</sup>

While the *Anticlaudianus*, like the *Cosmographia*, approaches Neoplatonic cosmogony from the celestial standpoint, *DPN* establishes these themes from the beginning in relation to a prelapsarian, and personal, human perspective. It is from the dreamer's point of view that the sorrows of Nature and Genius' retribution are observed. Alan uses these divine intermediaries, embodied in human form, to convey poetically the discrepancy between morally debased mankind and celestial beings as well as the ennobling divine gifts that can help humans reintegrate with the natural order. Light and vision are central to Alan's treatment of these ideas, and his use of the visual to explain spiritual concepts is especially evident in the three aforementioned works. In a shorter work, the "Sermon", the Neoplatonic doctrine of emanation is expressed in visual terms. In this early poetic re-imagining of Neoplatonic cosmogony, Alan thus utilises a range of visual images and techniques to map out the universe and means by which the human mind may navigate it. According to Wetherbee, Alan follows

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<sup>462</sup> Wetherbee, 'Introduction' to Alan of Lille, *Literary Works*, vii-[xlx] (p. x).

<sup>463</sup> See Wetherbee, 'Introduction' to Alan of Lille, x-xi.

the practice of contemporary theologians in adapting Pseudo-Dionysian symbolism to Boethian Neoplatonism, by defining “the relation of temporal to eternal being” in terms of four spheres (the sensible, imaginable, rational, and intelligible), and adding a further correspondence of these to the four manifestations of the divine will in human cognition, through sense, imagination, reason, and intellection.<sup>464</sup> Reason is described as allowing the soul to ascend the ladder of contemplation into the world soul’s realm:

ubi vivificum fomitem, indefessum fontem, perpetuum solem, id est mundanam animam aspicit, quae mundanae machinae tenebras luce suae vegetationis illuminat, et quasi quodam oculo interiori clarificat. (18)

[W]here it *beholds* the life-giving spark, the unfailing fount, the perpetual sun—the world soul which illumines with the light of its enlivening power the dark places of the cosmic structure, and as if by a kind of inner vision makes them clearly visible. (emphasis added)

Towards the end of the “Sermon”, Alan calls upon his audience to contemplate the Trinity within the Neoplatonic framework he has established, through Neoplatonic means. Since the human soul cannot directly comprehend forms, geometrical shapes act as approximations that can be understood by the lower and higher faculties. (Macrobius in his *Commentary* includes an extended Neoplatonic discussion of numerology and geometry which Alan appears to emulate.) He quotes Claudian’s *On the Soul*: “God imprinted His triangle on the world, for on the world there appears the imprint of the Trinity” and then invites us to “imprint this triangle on our minds” [“Vere mundo Deus impressit triangulum quia in eo Trinitatis resultat vestigium” [...] “Hunc triangulum menti imprimamus”] (25; 28). The repeated use of the verb “imprinted” [“impressit”] presents God as *artifex*, the ultimate craftsman, while emphasising the physicality of the action (and the permanence of the Trinity) as well as the triangle as the eternal form that is apprehended indirectly through contemplation and which is clothed by the veil of the world’s corporeal and visual qualities. Imprinting the triangle on one’s mind in contemplation is a devotional act that guides one from sense and imagination to reason and perhaps intellect, elevating one’s soul to the level of the intelligible sphere.

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<sup>464</sup> Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry*, p. 62.

The longer allegorical poems for which Alan is most famous, *DPN* and *Anticlaudianus*, build upon the techniques of poetic visualisation and blended philosophy and theology displayed in the “Sermon”. While the *Anticlaudianus* has more in common with the cosmological allegories of Bernardus and Martianus, *DPN*, like Boethius’ *Consolation*, examines the relationship between macrocosm and microcosm from a human perspective. It is this focus, with an emphasis on human psychology, morality, and development, that later dream poets such as Guillaume de Lorris, Jean de Meun, Chaucer, and the *Pearl*-poet echo. Divine light remains a central trope in *DPN* (and the *Anticlaudianus*), though for Alan and later poets, it often represents the disparity between human and divine vision, understanding, intellect, and in the emanationist sense, the hierarchical model of divine, natural, and human creation.

Alan foregrounds light as a holy quality that is brought to Earth by Nature and other deities, rather than an intrinsic quality in man. Divine light is beyond the reach of man, dazzling his narrator with its intensity. Nature descends to him “from the inner palace of the unchanging realm” [“mulier ab impassibilis mundi penitiori delapsa palatio ad me maturare videbatur accessum”] (*DPN* 2, pr. 1) and her divinity is symbolised in a detailed description of her brilliant beauty and adornments. Gold and lustrous materials connote radiance, and her hair radiates “not by mere resemblance but by a native gleam that surpassed that of nature [which] gave the maiden’s head the appearance of a celestial body” [“non similitudinariae radiorum repraesentans effigiem sed eorum claritate nativa naturam praeveniens, in stellare corpus caput effigiabat puellae”], while a golden comb gathers her golden hair into “a regular and harmonious order” [in legitimi ordinis choream crinis aurum concilians”], and the combination of the two golds creates a “visual paralogism” [“paralogismum visui”] (2, pr. 1). Sheridan translates “paralogismum” as something which “baffled and misled the eyes”, opting for perhaps a

more sensory-orientated reading.<sup>465</sup> This sense is surely part of the passage, which expresses the dazzling effect of Nature's radiance as a paralogism (that is, beyond logic), encouraging an allegorical reading of imperfect eyesight as referring to the inability of the human mind literally and spiritually to apprehend the divine vision. The visual juxtaposition of white and gold which creates this effect suggests the purity and perfection of the former and the intensity of (divine) light necessary for the latter. In *On Colours*, Aristotle defines lustrous colours as those which support the transmission of light: lustre is "continuity and density of light; e.g. we have a glistening gold colour when the yellow colour of sunlight is highly concentrated and therefore lustrous" (793a10-15). Alan emphasises the quality of Nature's hair as having self-sufficient lustre that resembles nothing earthly, but heavenly. Male and female hair (including *Anticlaudianus* 1.273, 3.17) is significant for Alan because of its proximity to and protection of the brain, an idea deriving from the *Timaeus* (76c-d).<sup>466</sup>

Alan's Nature was modeled on Boethius' Lady Philosophy and Nature in the *Cosmographia*, though Alan's portrayal of her is substantially more visual, with extensive passages devoted to her crown, dress, and physique, emulating the *effictio* of Martianus Capella for describing the appearance of personified figures. The characterisation and description of Nature in *DPN* was influential: her confession to Genius and the latter's sermon appear in Jean de Meun's *RR*, and the dreamer of *PF* claims Nature appears just as she is described by Alan (*PF* 316-8). She is also a main character in the *Anticlaudianus*, leading the construction of the *novus homo*. In this work, she is not described in the same visual detail as in *DPN* and Alan's focus on her collaboration with other deities in creation makes her resemble more closely Bernardus' version. However, both of Alan's Natures are used to explore the themes of living and artistic creation.

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<sup>465</sup> Alan of Lille, *The Plaint of Nature*, ed. and trans. James J. Sheridan (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1980). Hereafter referred to as *DPN* (Sheridan).

<sup>466</sup> *DPN* (Sheridan), p. 74. The passage of the *Timaeus* is translated by Calcidius, though the head as the body's citadel is covered in cap. 231 of his *Commentary*.

The portrait of Nature in *DPN* was a significant model for the didactic capabilities of visual description through *ekphrasis*. The theory of *mimesis* [“imitation”] in Aristotle’s *Poetics* (1447a14-17)<sup>467</sup> was relatively unknown in the medieval Latin-speaking west: a version of it appeared in Averroes’ commentary, expressing the theory not in terms of *catarsis* and representation, but as a moralised view of art.<sup>468</sup> Even in the absence of this framework, the power of vivid visual description through *enargeia* and *ekphrasis* was recognised by poets, and was used influentially by Alan in particular. Barbetti considers *ekphrasis* a central element of visionary literature, secular and sacred. She widens its definition to include the textualisation of other art forms, and emphasises the act of artistic translation:

*Ekphrasis* is not only a literary genre as it has been commonly understood but also a *process* that engages the nuts and bolts of representation: what it means to translate an image (or a text)—or more precisely, the experience of viewing an image (or perceiving a text)—into language (or other texts).<sup>469</sup>

*Ekphrasis* should not only be understood as a retroactive descriptor but as an insight into perception of a given subject and the expression of this experience using another artistic form. It is deeply linked to “memory and its processes of composition and interpreting,” and emphasises the bond between experience and art.<sup>470</sup> Alan’s *ekphrasis* conveys several important truths about Nature’s role within the cosmic hierarchy through corporeal imagery. It also functions mnemonically through its ordered presentation: the crown and diadem represent the firmament and reside on her head, the seat of wisdom. Below it, her garments display all of nature organised by species. Her dress reveals the order, multitude, and beauty of creation, as well as natural and sacramental temporality:

primitus candoris lilio dealbata offendeat intuitum. Secundo velut paenitentia ducta, quasi laborans in melius ruboris sanguine purpurata splendebat. Tertio ad cumulum perfectionis viroris smaragdo oculis aplaudebat. (2, pr. 19)

At first it met the gaze with the gleaming whiteness of the lily; next, as if drawn to repentance and striving to do better, it was stained with blood of glowing purple; third, the height of perfection it greeted the eye with an emerald green.

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<sup>467</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. I. Bywater, in *Works*, vol. 2, 2316-2340.

<sup>468</sup> See William F. Hodapp, “The Real and Surreal in Medieval Dream Vision: The Case of James I’s *Kingis Quair*,” *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, 42/1 (2009), 55-76 (p. 58) on the relationship between *mimesis* and *verisimilitudo*.

<sup>469</sup> Barbetti, pp. 4-5.

<sup>470</sup> Barbetti, p. 2.



The principle of ordered cyclicity blends Christian and Neoplatonist symbolism through the use of colour. It may be connected to a similar, albeit colourless, tenet in the *Consolation*: “The world in constant change / Maintains a harmony” [“Quod mundus stabili fide / concordēs uariat uices”] by the rule of Love (2, met. 8).<sup>471</sup> The *ekphrasis* expresses the marvellous—that is, Nature’s creation and the principle of natural change—through the material concepts of colour, image, and motion. The elaborate ekphrases of her diadem and crown, set with luminescent gems and visually representing the structure and movement of the cosmos and the depiction of all earthly life and the changing of the seasons in her clothing, effectively function as the sensible veil that clothes divine truths, the Macrobian definition of dream symbols. It requires some effort on the viewer’s part to see the ethereal garment, which resists straightforward visual and rational ascertainment: “So subtly woven was this garment, moreover, that it evaded the scrutiny of sight, and had attained such a fineness that you might think it was of the same nature as air” [“Haec autem nimis subtilizata, subterfugiens oculorum indaginem, ad tantam materiae tenuitatem devenerat ut eius aerisque eandem crederes esse naturam”] (*DPN* 2, pr. 19). A similar motif is used when Nature arrives on Earth: the human observer struggles to see her and attempts to control his eyes as if they were soldiers, establishing the extent to which man has strayed from the heavenly *genii* and therefore his primary source (4, pr. 2). (She also arrives in a chariot of glass [“curru vitreo”], presumably so as not to obscure her radiance (4, pr. 2).)

The robe’s images support the power of allegory and, significantly, imitative art, to represent reality: the eye is “held in reverie by the dreamlike effect of art” [“prouit oculus in picturae imaginabatur sompno”] (*Ibid.*). The allegorical representation of these creatures appears to be “literally present” [“videbantur ad litteram”] (2, pr. 24), for “the enchantment of art [gives] life to earthly creatures” [“[i]n quibus quaedam picturae incantatio terrestria animalia vivere faciebat”] (2, pr. 28), conflating *enargeia*,

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<sup>471</sup> Love is also imagined as a peaceful charioteer, a possible influence on Alan’s description of Nature’s glass chariot driven willingly by Jove’s doves (*DPN*, 4, pr.2).

which makes things appear in the mind's eye, with the existence of natural creation. The liveliness of the *ekphrasis* celebrates Nature's power, but also foreshadows the darker possibility of creation defying the creator, as man does. The part of her tunic which should depict man is torn (8, pr. 23-24). Nature's gown thus conveys her artistic skill, as well as the potential for divine art to bring life to things, and suggests her lack of control over her more godlike and independent creation, mankind. She proclaims, "I am she who modeled the nature of man in imitation of the model of the cosmic order, so that in his nature, as in a mirror, one might see this natural order inscribed" ["Ego illa sum quae ad exemplarem mundanae machinae similitudinem hominis exemplavi naturam, ut in ea velut in speculo ipsius mundi scripta natura compareat"] (6, pr. 6).

This power of bringing things into being is also the source of Nature's grief. She laments mankind's perceived misuse of sexuality. Nature's domain is over physical and mortal beings, whose nature it is to die. Alan invests the metaphor of Nature's book with a Neoplatonic (and Aristotelian) resonance:

In latericiis vero tabulis, arundinei stili ministerio, virgo varias rerum picturaliter suscitabat imagines. Pictura tamen, subiacenti materiae familiariter non cohaerens, velociter evanescendo moriens, nulla imaginum post se relinquebat vestigia. Quas cum saepe suscitando puella crebro vivere faciebat, tamen in scripturae proposito imagines preserverare non poterant. (4, pr. 1)

On clay tablets, with the aid of a reed pen, the maiden was giving life to the pictured forms of various creatures. But her imagery, rather than adhering closely to this material surface, soon died and disappeared, leaving behind no trace of its forms. Though the girl was constantly restoring them to life, their forms were not able to survive in this inscriptional fashion.

Homosexuality is presented as mankind's main transgression because it disrupts the continuity of life. This is linked to the gift of reason in humans. Alan also increases the resonance of his allegory to include poetic creation, as he integrates thought, birth, and verbal composition (1, met. 1.25-32): man "destroys the laws of Nature's art" when "he strikes an anvil that mints no seed" ["Artis Naturae iura perire facit. / Cudit in incude quae semina nulla monetat"] (26-7). They create "anastrophe" instead of following natural, analogous "Dionean art", thereby destroying Nature through perverse

grammatical constructions (8, pr. 8). (*Analogia*, associated with resemblance,<sup>472</sup> is placed against *anastrophe*, or manipulation of conventional word order.<sup>473</sup>) Imagination and recollection are key faculties by which the mind functions in the absence of external objects. The dilemma established from the opening of *DPN* may be read as a dislocation between human sexual activity and its “proper *significatio*”, according to Wetherbee.<sup>474</sup>

The connection between words, thought images, and corporeal things is made possible by Genius, the divine intermediary and the champion of procreation. His entrance suggests a redirection of human creativity, sexual and mental, or artistic, that is beyond the power of Nature to provide. Genius supports the continuity of human life and ideas, both of which are necessary for humans to resume their proper role within the universe. Through art and the truths that can be ascertained from it, mankind can achieve a kind of symbolic immortality. Genius is the personification of *ingenium*, the mental faculty described by Alcher de Clairvaux as that which seeks out or investigates new knowledge, allowing the soul to know unknowables: [“qua anima se extendit et exercet ad incognitorum cognitionem”] (*Spiritu et anima* 11.787.31).<sup>475</sup> In Geoffrey of Vinsauf’s *Poetria nova*, the process of comprehension occurs partly through the activation of *ingenium* upon memory, expressed in the image of wax softening under fire, which also evokes the Aristotelian notion of *kinein*.<sup>476</sup> Geoffrey writes:

Formula materiae, quasi quaedam formula cerae, / Primitus est tactus duri: si sedula cura / Igniat ingenium,  
subito mollescit ad ignem / Ingenii sequiturque manum quocumque vocarit, / Ductilis ad quicquid. Hominis  
manus interioris / Ducit ut amplificet vel curtet. (213-219)

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<sup>472</sup> Wetherbee notes in his edition of *DPN*, p. 577, that “analogy or ‘proportion’ in grammar concerns the inflected endings of words and [their] correct linkages”.

<sup>473</sup> See Sheridan’s footnote, *DPN*, p. 134, which also cites instances of these terms in grammatical treatises; Marenbon, p. 93, explains that the parallel between language and physical procreation reflects the later thirteenth-century interest in speculative grammar derived from Aristotle’s *De interpretatione*.

<sup>474</sup> Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry*, p. 189.

<sup>475</sup> See Lynch, *High Medieval Dream Vision*, p. 36: “In the ascent from inferior to superior apprehension, [*ingenium*’s] action follows that of imagination and cogitation and directly precedes that of intellect.” Also cf. pp. 26-42 for an outline of variations on the medieval definition of *ingenium* as closer to reason and intellect, or to imagination, in Guillaume de Conches, Isidore of Seville, Dante, Geoffrey of Vinsauf, and Bernardus Silvestris. Geoffrey of Vinsauf’s definition is discussed below as representative of the imaginative and creative understanding of *ingenium*.

<sup>476</sup> On Calcidius’ use of the image of malleable wax in reference to *silva*, the chaotic primordial matter upon which Providence established harmony and form to create the universe, see Corinne J. Saunders, *The Forest of Medieval Romance: Avernus, Broceliande, Arden* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993), pp. 19-20.

If, with sedulous care, your talent sets it afire, it will quickly grow soft under the warmth of your genius and, totally manageable, will follow wherever the hand leads. The hand of the inner man will lead to Amplification or Abbreviation [i.e., composition].”

With such a guide, the *ingenium* may then respond by processing and synthesising ideas presented by the text. The veil of allegory, much like Macrobius’ veil over divine truths, is reconstituted into something meaningful in human terms. Nature lists the abuses of poetry: they lack the clarity of philosophy, may “prostitute naked falsehood to their audience with no protecting garment” [“poetae sine omni palliationis remedio auditoribus nudam falsitatem prostituunt”], lull their listeners into enchantment with the “honeyed sweetness” [“delectationis dulcedine”] of their words, mislead with seemingly “exemplary images [so] they may stamp the minds of men on the anvil of dishonourable emulation” [“per exemplorum imagines hominum animos inhonestae morigerationis incude sigillent”], or encourage one to read things literally and thus superficially [“in superficiali litterae”] (*DPN* 8, pr. 17). Nature states that she has left literal interpretation and false poetry “beneath the cloud of silence” and brings the proper discourse of wisdom “into the light of truthful narration” [“ista nube taciturnitatis obduxi, illa vero in lucem verae narrationis explicui”] (*DPN* 8, pr. 20). This espousal of the true value of art is resumed in a later portrayal of God as cosmic artisan:

Deus ab ydeali internae praeconceptionis thalamo mundialis palatii fabricam foras voluit evocare, et mentale verbum, quod ab aeterno de mundi constitutione conceperat, reali eiusdem existentia velut materiali verbo depingere, tanquam mundi elegans architectus, tanquam aureae fabricate faber aurarius, velut stupendi artificii artificiosus artifex [...] (8, pr. 28)<sup>477</sup>

[God] represent[s] in actual existence, as a material idea, the mental idea of the creation of the universe which he had conceived eternally—like an elegant cosmic architect, like a goldsmith creating a work of gold, like the highly gifted artist of an astonishing piece of art [...]

Through these corrective portrayals of art, Alan effectively builds a parallel between the creation of the universe as the manifestation of God’s eternal will, goodness, and wisdom, and the use of poetry to see beyond the literal and the visible to ascertain universal truths.

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<sup>477</sup> *DPN* 8, pr. 29-30 continues in this Platonic register, describing the ordering of the cosmos, the adhesion of matter and form, and the resemblance of creatures to the eternal exemplar.

Genius provides the necessary intellectual connection between Nature's physical forms and the eternal ideas. In the *Cosmographia*, Nature meets Genius during her trip to the more distant spheres of the cosmos. He has dominion over forms and their properties, or the combination of form and matter, a duty that Wetherbee interprets as marking "the limits of Nature's ascent toward the origins of being."<sup>478</sup> In *DPN*, Alan emphasises the discrepancy between Nature's dealings with matter and Genius's power over ideal and material.<sup>479</sup> Both create images that wax and wane, though Genius's skill appears to surpass Nature's, for his pictures are more explicitly connected to the eternal ideas of truth and essentiality. The brief cycles of life and death shown on Genius's gown are echoed in his book, whereby the symbolic transformation of idea into actuality represents sexual and artistic generation (16, pr. 7). He is both scribe and illuminator, transforming thoughts into words, continuously working stylus to clean vellum. Alan thus demonstrates the transposition of idea into written form, but then reverses the process:

in sinistra vero morticini pellem novaculae demorsione pilorum caesarie denudatam, in qua stili obsequentis subsidio imagines rerum, ab umbra picturae ad veritatem suae essentiae transmigrantes, vita sui generis munerabat; quibus deletionis morte sopitis, novae nativitatis ortu alias revocabat in vitam. (18, pr. 7)

[W]ith the aid of the obedient pen, he granted to images of creatures the life proper to their kind, making them pass from painted shadow to the truth of their essential nature. As these were laid to rest by the death of deletion, he recalled others to life in the rising of a new nativity.

On one level, this suggests the illumination of mankind: thought allows humans to progress from being mere physical resemblances of divine forms to an existence elevated by worship and contemplation. When the body dies, souls return to their essential natures and fully understand truth. But on another level, the work of Genius also parallels the writing and reading of poetry. Ideas are converted into words, which when read produce mental images that when interpreted properly lead to truth. While poetic truths enter individual minds and die with the defects of memory or the literal

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<sup>478</sup> Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry*, p. 175.

<sup>479</sup> *Ibid.*

death of a person, there is always the opportunity for texts to find new readers and to be read again: for rebirth and reinterpretation.

The emphasis on painting may be explained in reference to a passage from the *Anticlaudianus*. The heavenly sphere to which Fronesis journeys (as part of her *Cosmographia*-like journey through the universe, in this case to create a postlapsarian new man) is “a region of untroubled light, a gleaming fountain, where the stars are radiant, where the lights of the firmament compete in brilliance, and maintain an endless day, and the constellations adorn the face of the heavens” [“Lucis inoffensae spatium fontemque nitoris, / quo radiant stellae quo certant fulgure multo / astra poli propriumque diem sine fine perennant, / quo caeli faciem depingunt sidera”] (5.1-4). Her understanding faltering, Fronesis meets the queen of the firmament, who is described in a manner similar to Nature and Genius in *DPN*, only she is more radiant and her gown through subtle needlework “depicts the mysteries of God” (5.112-8). Language, because it is created by Nature, fails when trying to speak of the divine: “Painting proclaims what the tongue cannot utter” [“Quod lingua nequit picture fatetur”] (5.118). This may be read as a visual explanation of the following lines, which describe God’s divine names of things [“rerum nomina”] (5.124) as maintaining their purity and avoiding worldly (i.e. human) signification by handling them with “the agency of metaphor and the rule of figuration” [“mediante tropo, dictante figura / sustinet et voces puras sine rebus adoptat”] (5.126-7). Reading becomes a metaphor for divine illumination: in this sphere one can read “albeit obscurely and in tentative figuration” [“Hic legitur tamen obscure tenuique figura”] about the nature of God, “the one true author” [“unicus auctor”] and understand his law through the “mirror, light, splendour, [and] image” [“speculum lux splendour imago”] of the Father and the Trinity (5.147-155).

The *Cosmographia* and the works of Alan of Lille are significant analogues for the treatment of vision and visual symbolism, such as light and *ekphrasis*, in later dream poetry. These works reflect a continued interest in ‘Christianising’ Neoplatonism, developing the use of allegory as a vehicle for

philosophical and theological messages, and defining the role of art, human and divine. Light is a significant image for Bernardus and Alan in terms of cosmic emanation and spiritual illumination. Alan elaborates upon themes mentioned in the poetry of Bernardus and other allegorists and is a major influence upon later dream poetry for his imaginative approach to understanding *invisibilia per visibilia* through Nature and Genius, and their relationship to humanity. He also deepens the use of art as a metaphor for divine and human creation, laying the foundation for the self-conscious allegories of artistic creation and dream experience from RR onward.

The following section focuses on the presentation of *perspectiva* and art in *RR*, a text which draws together many of the visual theories and imagery used by Bernardus and Alan and transforms earlier philosophical dramas of divine creation and human error into an allegorical dream vision about erotic love and artistic creation. The relationship of vision and art to the Lover's personal progression is presented in two fundamental ways. The first is the technique of *ekphrasis*, which is used more extensively and imaginatively in *RR* than in the analogues discussed above. The second concerns the fractured correspondence between image and reality, thematised in Guillaume de Lorris' mirror of Narcissus and paralleled in Jean's continuation by the carbuncle, culminating in the storming of the ivory tower. Through these means, *RR* sets a significant precedent for the treatment of poetic description of things seen corporeally and incorporeally, and the role of natural and artificial images in later dream poetry.

As discussed above, *enargeia* and *ekphrasis* comprise two significant literary techniques engaging bodily and mental vision in dream poetry. Conventional ekphrases in dream poetry (that is, as a textual representation of an image) include the wall surrounding the garden of *Deduit* in *RR*, the walls of the bedroom *BD*, and the walls inside the Temple of Venus in *HF*. In these instances, *ekphrasis* is used to integrate narrative material from external sources within a tale, and to establish these analogues as the (literal) background or enclosure contextualizing the events of the dream. Barbetti views the medieval dream vision as "a highly sophisticated and stylized form of *ekphrasis*,"<sup>480</sup> building on Krieger's assertion that self-reflexivity alone makes dream vision texts ekphrastic.<sup>481</sup> This reflexivity parallels self-reflective contemplation, but is used instead to achieve a personal and artistic truth. *RR* displays

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<sup>480</sup> Barbetti, p. 20. (Italics added.)

<sup>481</sup> Murray Krieger, *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 22.



the self-consciousness of Guillaume de Lorris and particularly Jean de Meun about the capacities of poetry and art in general to explore the intricacies of human love with the same depth as early philosophical allegories had treated cosmic harmony and truth. *RR* is both a romance and a philosophical allegory, though it prioritises lived human experience, for all its potential faults and shortcomings, ultimately achieving a kind of devotional transcendence that parallels but also opposes the spiritual apotheosis in works such as the *Anticlaudianus*. In Alan's text, Fronesis abandons reason to ascend to the highest sphere (5.1-4). In *RR*, the lover's willing rejection of Reason is cast in an entirely different light: he becomes a disciple of Love, achieving a comparable, though emphatically human, self-realisation, through bodily feeling and emotion.

As a result of this fundamental departure, *RR* (and later dream visions and allegories influenced by it) reshapes the traditional philosophical allegory, which focuses on attaining truth by seeing *through* reality, to a new mode of constructing reality and articulating human experience through and in relation to the human art. At this point it is worth mentioning another conceptual distinction between *RR* and the poems previously discussed: *RR*, with its thematisation of mortal and divine craftsmanship, displays what may be understood as a new or more fully realised use of *ekphrasis*. The present discussion of *ekphrasis* adopts Barbetti's definition: whereas mimesis aims, to some extent, to imitate reality, "[t]he ekphrastic principle as it is employed in the medieval dream vision is about the *impossibility* of arriving at reality through art and language."<sup>482</sup> Jean addresses the discrepancy between human and divine creation as part of his version of Nature's complaint. Nature works tirelessly at her forge to generate new things ["touz jorz forge [...] par generacion nouvele"] (16014-6), while Art mimics Nature since she cannot herself create living things (16033-38; Horgan 248). This is followed by a list of materials, techniques, and subjects Art may employ to make things lifelike, though never living. The impossibilities of properly writing about Nature and her creations are described elsewhere. Not even

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<sup>482</sup> Barbetti, p. 28. (Emphasis added.)

the greatest of philosophers, Aristotle, Plato, Ptolemy, Albus, or Euclid, is capable of exercising their ingenuity to such an extent (16169-77; Horgan 250). A series of mythological figures are then added to the list: Pygmalion, Parrhasius, Apelles, Myron, Polycletus, and Zeuxis, the latter of whom receives a more extended allusion based on Cicero's account of the artist in his book on rhetoric (16177-16214). The allusions to the stories of Zeuxis and Pygmalion present potentially antithetical views of art: on one hand a sterile creation that can be deceptive and lure one to idolatry; on the other hand, a truthful, living thing. The inclusion of Pygmalion as part of this list is problematic because his beloved statue is brought to life with divine help, as related later in the poem. Akbari argues that Pygmalion represents a model of successful love and is the antithesis of Narcissus.<sup>483</sup> This reading is valid insofar as sexual generation is concerned, although the figures share some similarities. Arguably, Pygmalion's love of his creation is, in fact, another form of self-love. On the other hand, the myth may indicate a transcendence of narcissistic love through contemplative introspection; the statue, a work of art, is the means by which the human artist expresses and manifests the sublime beauty that resides in all of creation. A detailed analysis of Narcissus and Pygmalion follows. The RR lover's negative portrayal of philosophers and artists feeds into a critical self-assessment which casts doubt upon the truth capacity of poetry. His identity as poet is emphasised as he humbly admits the difficulty of describing Nature (16223-32; Horgan 250). Like God, "whose beauty is beyond measure" ["li biaux outre mesure"] (16237; Horgan 251), Nature's appearance defies human comprehension. The poet's response, curiously, is to avoid any attempt to conceptualise or verbalise Nature, and to give up on thinking altogether (16233-6; Horgan 251). The passage emulates the tone of earlier philosophical allegories, though the shifted context of Jean's characterisation of the shortcomings of language, from divine to human concerns, suggests a further resonance that bears more on language as shaping human experience. Akbari views Jean's interest in nominalist debates as a central theme whereby the

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<sup>483</sup> Akbari, p. 86.

dissolution between words and things underlies the poem's deviation from earlier models of personification and allegory and the prioritization of direct experience over conceptual or aesthetic mediation.<sup>484</sup> The poet ultimately opts for lived experience, which the rest of the poem enacts as a shattering of successive layers of conceiving reality.

In terms of visual literary description, RR builds upon tropes and techniques used in its philosophical allegorical analogues. RR's change in focus from divine to human love and its infusion of allegory and romance facilitate an analysis of the role of art in human perception and experience. The sections hitherto mentioned may be read as another critical development in attitudes toward human art and vision in dream poetry that departs from a mimetic approach to thematise the main concern of *ekphrasis*: the relationship between art and reality. The examples so far have been of direct (albeit symbolic or veiled) vision of divine things. The following discussion focuses on visualising earthly things through reflection and refraction, and the danger of illusion in indirect or partial-sightedness as represented by the figures of Narcissus and Pygmalion.

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<sup>484</sup> Akbari, p. 105.

*Illusion and Truth: Narcissus and Pygmalion*

The Mirror of Narcissus episode of RR highlights the vision's central themes of true love, self-knowledge, and the difference between representation and reality. It is based upon Ovid's account in book three of the *Metamorphoses*. Multiple medieval versions of the Narcissus tale portray him as the anti-Eros, whom the God of Love must destroy in order to remove the threat he poses to procreative love.<sup>485</sup> In *DPN*, man is characterized as predicate as well as subject, paralleling Narcissus' self-love, and he is banished from knowing Genius (1.19-20, 1.59-60). This statement reiterates the juxtaposition of self-knowledge and vitality in the *Metamorphoses* and RR:

Narcissus etiam sui umbra alterum mentita Narcisum, umbratilitate obumbratus, seipsum credens esse se alterum de se sibi amoris incurrit periculum. Multi etiam alii iuvenes mei gratia pulchritudinis honore vestiti, siti debriati pecuniae, suos Veneris malleos in incudum transtulerunt officia.

Narcissus, too, when his reflection feigned another Narcissus, was left in darkness by this shadow. Believing himself to be this other self, he brought upon himself through himself a perilous love. And many other young men, endowed with glorious beauty through my favor, but drunk with the thirst for wealth, have converted their hammers of Venus to perform the function of the anvil. (*DPN* 8.10)

Other medieval versions of the Narcissus story increase the dramatic irony of the recognition scene in which he understands the error of his ways and effectively becomes a devotee of Love.<sup>486</sup> In Ovid's account he tragically achieves full understanding of the prophecy Tiresias had told his mother, Liriope. He explains that Narcissus will live a long life "[i]f he ne'er know himself" ["si se non noverit"], and these "empty ["vana"] words" are later proven correct (*Met.* III.348-9).<sup>487</sup> Although the myth would become a popular medieval motif for the dangers of idolatry, its usage in RR is more aligned with its analogue's thematisation of self-knowledge. According to Huot, the Narcissus episode in RR "revolves around problems of desire, knowledge and interpretation."<sup>488</sup>

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<sup>485</sup> See Frederick Goldin, *The Mirror of Narcissus in the Courty Love Lyric* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 42.

<sup>486</sup> Goldin, p. 42.

<sup>487</sup> The text of Book III is found in the first volume of Miller's edition of Ovid's *Met.*

<sup>488</sup> Sylvia Huot, *Dreams of Lovers and Lies of Poets: Poetry, Knowledge, and Desire in the Roman de la Rose* (London: Legenda, 2010), p. 31.

The tale of Narcissus contains repeated images of reflection, deception, and illusion, related to the pains of unrequited love, which result in Echo's death (III.385-400), and the infamous curse brought on by another spurned nymph. When he falls in love with his reflection, "He loves an unsubstantial hope [...] substance which is only shadow" ["spem sine corpore amat [...] quod umbra est"] (III.417) and its remoteness is evinced through its comparison to a statue: "He looks in speechless wonder at himself and hangs there motionless in the same expression, like a statue carved from Parian marble" ["adstupet ipse sibi vultuque inmotus eodem haeret, ut e Pario formatum marmore signum"] (III.418-19). The "fleeting image" ["simulacra fugacia"] (III.432), causes a real physical and emotional reaction, torturing his eyes with desire (III.430-1). The lover of *RR* is aware of the dangers of the crystals beneath the fountain. Instead of falling in love with his own reflection, he sees that of the rose. The God of Love's explanation to the Lover of the pains and illusions that accompany the experience of love resemble Ovid's account:

'Or revenra maintes foies  
 Qu'an pensant t'antroblieras  
 Et une grant piece seras  
 Ausis com une ymage mue  
 Qui ne se crole ne remue,  
 Sanz piez, sanz mains, sanz doiz croler,  
 Sanz iaus movoir et sanz parler.' (2282-8)

'[I]t will happen that you lose yourself in your thoughts and remain for a long time like a dumb image, still and motionless, without moving foot or hand, finger or eye, and without speaking.' (Horgan 35)

As a result, the lover will suffer and lament the physically unattainable vision or memory of the rose. His body cannot follow his eyes or heart's desire, so he reasons, "if my eyes do not escort my heart, nothing that they see has any value for me [...] instead they should visit the object of my heart's desire" ["Se mi oeil le cuer ne convoient, / Je ne pris pas quanque il voient [...] mes aillors visiter / Ce dont li cuers a tel talent"] (2306-7; 1208-9; Horgan 35). The replacement of self-love with outwardly directed love enables the Lover to progress towards the rose. The theme of confusing representation and reality in the myth of Narcissus is a backdrop against which *RR*'s quest for the rose and the differences

between art and experience are developed. The Lover and the poet share the task of navigating these oscillating boundaries. As Huot argues, the Lover misreads the garden of *Deduit* as real rather than allegorical and therefore attempts to become a player in it. However, “[a]s a poetic image, it can never be an object of either desire or knowledge in itself, but only a medium through which to access knowledge of a different order.”<sup>489</sup> Similarly, “[as an] object of erotic desire, the Rose highlights the extent to which the Lover, rather like Narcissus, mistakes fictions for realities.”<sup>490</sup> The Lover’s inability to approach the rose, instead settling for memorial images, places him in a similar situation to Narcissus, and at least initially, Pygmalion, both of whom are prevented from consummating their love by the barrier between image and reality.

Jean de Meun’s account of the myth of Pygmalion and the carbuncle in the Spring of Life structurally and thematically responds to Guillaume’s portion of the poem, unifying the two parts as an allegorical romance that establishes its perspectives on love and poetry through motifs of sight and visual art. Between the firing of the arrow and the destruction of the painting in the tower is an extended digression detailing the story of Pygmalion (20810-21118, Horgan 321-7).<sup>491</sup> The tale, based on Ovid’s *Met.* X.242-97, parallels Guillaume’s Fountain of Narcissus episode, countering self-love with an archetypal human love that merges art and sexual generation and transcends the limits of the human. Although Pygmalion believes himself to be at odds with Nature for loving an inanimate object, he claims to be less mad than Narcissus because he can at least gain some comfort by touching and physically possessing his ivory sculpture (20863-92, Horgan 321-2). The statue is set apart from the reflection as an object of love both by its materiality (or to put it another way, its physical being) and as a result, its independence from its creator. When it is brought to life, the love is fully realised as

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<sup>489</sup> Huot, *Dreams of Lovers*, p. 42.

<sup>490</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>491</sup> Pygmalion has only been mentioned in passing as part of Old Woman’s advice (13092, Horgan 201) and as part of the list described above.

reciprocal and procreative: they marry and give birth to Adonis. The tale foreshadows the literal destruction of the ivory tower and the consummation of the love affair between the Lover and the Rose. The allegorical register of Alan, invoked in the dialogue of Nature and Genius, ends, and with it the theme of sexual generation from a cosmic perspective. The narrative then recounts the destruction of allegorical *figurae* and images, the psychological barriers Danger, Fear, and Shame, and the painting enclosed in the tower, to directly and physically reach the rose. The psychic triumph of this section may also be read as a correction to the tragedy of self-knowledge in Ovid's story of Narcissus. The lover has fulfilled the advice given by Nature: "[q]u'il aime celui sagement / Qui se connoist entierement" ["for he alone loves wisely, who knows himself thoroughly"] (17795-6, Horgan 274).

The stripping of conceptual layers or literary and visual substitutes for raw experience is expressed in terms of burning. The rose is gained by immolation. Venus's flaming arrow hits a prized painting, described as exceeding the beauty of Pygmalion's statue, stored in the tower's reliquary. The destruction of the image and the tower suggests liberation from artistic representation, while freeing Fair Welcome, Courtesy, Pity, and Openness enacts a parallel psychological liberation. Ovid's Narcissus is consumed by the fire of his own desire in his recognition scene (*Met.* III.463-5). Narcissus becomes subject and object: "he praises, and is himself what he praises" ["qui probat, ipse probatur"] (*Met.* III.425). Unlike the love of Narcissus, whose substance melts away into nothing, the poet-dreamer's love is realisable, like Pygmalion's, because it exists outside himself, and beneath its layers of conceptual representation resides the reality of the rose.

Guillaume's Perilous Mirror episode provides a pivotal juxtaposition between narcissistic self-love and true, reciprocal love. Though the lover tries to avoid looking into it, he soon becomes transfixed by the scene's optical luminescence and reflective clarity. The gravel seems brighter than fine silver ["plus clere qu'argenz vis"] and the fountain is of immeasurable beauty (1524-6; Horgan

24). The doubling motif of the two channels that supply the fountain and nourish its surroundings suggests to the reader if not the lover the sinister significance of reflection as duplicitous, as the two crystals at the bottom of the stream. The lover observes how the “all-seeing sun” [“li solaus qui tout aguete”] sends its rays into the depths of the spring, which are refracted against the crystal in “more than a hundred colours” [“los perent colors plus de .c.”] (1540, 1543; Horgan 24), linking this visual appeal to truthful illumination, as it actualises the sun’s rays, making them visible to the human eye: “the crystal is so marvellous and has such power that the whole place, with its trees and flowers and everything adorning the garden, is revealed there in due order” [“Si ot le cristal merueilleus / Itel force que touz li leus, / Arbres et flors et quanque orne / Li vergiers, i pert tout a orne.”] (1546-9; Horgan 25). The accuracy of the crystals’ reflective power is elucidated in terms of the optics of mirrors: each crystal reflects half of the garden, presumably aiding the viewer by revealing more than would be normally seen with the naked eye, for all things, small, secret, or hidden, are revealed in the crystals “as if it were etched in the crystal” [“Com s’ele ere ou cristal portraite”] (1567; Horgan 25). The myth of Narcissus is then integrated into the discussion of the mirror’s properties. The powerlessness of men to resist the love that overtakes them upon gazing in the mirror is due to Cupid having sown the seeds of Love around the entire area with the intention of ensnaring lovers, “for Love wants no other birds” [“Qu’amors ne viaut autres oissiaus”] (1591; Horgan 25).

The spring thus encapsulates the paradoxical peril and enrichment associated with love. The poet assures his audience that his truthful exposition—“the truth of the matter” [“la verite de la matiere”] (1598; Horgan 25)—is superior to any other accounts in books or romances, presumably because the story that follows is a primary experience of the mirror’s effects; however his fate will differ from Narcissus’ in one major respect. Goldin argues that the Lover’s knowledge of the Narcissus story prevents him from succumbing to the same fate.<sup>492</sup> He pleasantly perceives a multitude of things

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<sup>492</sup> Goldin, p. 54.



through the crystals before the mirror's deceptive nature becomes apparent (1606; Horgan 25) and he sees his reflection, realizing he has fallen into the same trap as many other men. In the critical moments between looking into the mirror and being seized upon by Love, the rose is substituted as the object of his gaze (1604-1622; Horgan 25). This supports the possibility of a narrative continuation based on self-evaluation in response to loving another. The Lover will ultimately need to overcome emotional and intellectual obstacles truly and physically to integrate with the rose.

The Perilous Mirror episode and the subsequent devotion of the narrator to Love conclude Guillaume's part of *RR* and offer the narrative and conceptual framework by which Jean's elaboration of vision as a motif for love and understanding will be placed. Akbari argues that Guillaume may have left his poem intentionally unfinished "in imitation of man's ultimate incapacity to achieve knowledge of the self."<sup>493</sup> Jean does not necessarily provide a solution to this issue, though he prioritises the importance of turning outward to live and love truly. Jean also substantially develops the theme of artistic truth in relation to the Lover's quest. The rose is conceived of as an enigmatic symbol that is simultaneously literal and allegorical, alive and inanimate, image or word and reality. One may view the theme of doubleness established in the fountain scene in relation to the epistemological capacity of art.

It is helpful to consider *RR*'s overlap between object and sign, meaning and word in relation to *enargeia* and *ekphrasis*. One may view certain ekphrases encountered in *RR* and previously in philosophical allegories as visually described *integumenta*. The meaning of visual symbols in *RR* is implicit in the descriptions of these objects themselves. Ekphrastic objects tend to disrupt the narrative tempo of texts. Alan of Lille's description of Nature's clothing and appearance is an extended

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<sup>493</sup> Akbari, p. 19. Akbari, pp. 46-8, builds on previous arguments for the poem as a full, symmetrical structure, the episodes of which centre upon the Mirror of Narcissus scene, and specifically the lover looking into the crystals. Cf. Paul Verhuyck, 'Guillaume de Lorris ou la multiplication des cadres', *Neophilologus* 58 (1974), 283-93; Douglas Kelly, 'Translatio Studii: Translation, Adaptation, and Allegory in Medieval French Literature', *Philological Quarterly*, 57 (1978), 287-310.

digression from the poem's action. *Ekphrasis* describes objects already in existence (even though things within them may change, like the revolutions of Nature's crown). Visual symbols are integrated into a text. At the same time, the *being* of an ekphrastic object within a text is enabled by verbal description which functions cumulatively and can be viewed as a kind of *becoming*.<sup>494</sup> The complexity of the rose as both symbol and character, and something which is difficult to grasp figuratively and literally, can be better understood in terms of the possibilities of verbal and visual representation. Krieger remarks on the "doubleness" of poetic language in terms of what he calls the "ekphrastic principle", whereby the simultaneity of language—"in the verbal figure, of fixity and flow, of an image at once grasped and yet slipping away through the crevices of language"—is enabled by an awareness of verbal imagery "as at once limitedly referential and mysteriously self-substantial".<sup>495</sup> This view is illuminating in terms of Jean's new and influential use of allegory. The narrator is self-conscious about the limits of verbal representation and will not assume the role of divine creator reserved for figures such as Genius. Like Alan, he becomes dumb at the sight of Nature's beauty. The rose is referential and self-substantial, visual and verbal. To gain true insight into love and to love the rose truly, the lover gradually breaks down mental and verbal barriers that have informed and mediated his perception of it. The ending of the poem arrives at this kind of physical truth through erotic love by transcending the symbolic categories of the rose, fulfilling for Krieger "the aesthetic dream of our culture [...] of a miracle that permits these opposed impulses to come together in the paradoxical immediacy of *ekphrasis*, whether as a verbal replacement for a visual image or as its own verbal emblem that plays the role of a visual image while playing its own role."<sup>496</sup> Allusions to the myth of Pygmalion contribute to a novel view of art and, along with the carbuncle, provide alternative conceptions of sight, art, and truth in response to Guillaume's Narcissus episode.

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<sup>494</sup> Krieger, p. 8.

<sup>495</sup> Krieger, p. 11.

<sup>496</sup> *Ibid.* (Italics added.)

Prior to the tale's retelling of the tale of Pygmalion and details about the Spring of Life, the idea of truth is developed in terms of optical science as part of Nature's confession. Earlier, Jean had renamed the poem *The Mirror of Lovers* ["*Le miroer aus amoureux*"] (10655, Horgan 163). He later extols the power of physical mirrors to extend vision and ultimately to foster knowledge as part of Nature's discourse which incorporates contemporary theories of *perspectiva*, citing Aristotle and the *Optics* of Alhazen, one of his disciples (18034-8; Horgan 278). Nature explains the "marvellous powers" ["*merveilleus pooir*"] (18050; Horgan 278) of mirrors, which can produce accurate reflections as well as illusions, some of which are an aid to sight; they may distort visible qualities such as size, clarity, and quantity depending on angle and medium (18050-18292; Horgan 278-1). She also details the susceptibility of the human eye to illusion in general: like dreams, mirrors can make "phantoms" ["*fantosmes*"] appear to onlookers (18185-6; Horgan 280). The passage following the description of "phantoms" seems especially reminiscent of the optical theory of Robert Grosseteste (c. 1168-1235), Bishop of Lincoln from 1235 to 1253, and a prominent thirteenth-century intellectual figure. In RR, refraction is explained in terms of a medium that "reverses the image and multiplies it many times" ["*Qui tant se va montepliant / Par le moien obediant*"] (18195-6; Horgan 281). (Elsewhere, Jean alludes to *species* ["*esp(i)eces*"] in the context of natural and artistic creation, and the transformation of elements (16072, 16088; Horgan 248-9).) Torti suggests Grosseteste as a source for many of the optical theories outlined in this section, particularly the view of the moon as an optical glass influenced by celestial bodies.<sup>497</sup>

The eye is also likened to an optical glass which is subject to illusions arising from physiological and

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<sup>497</sup> Anna Torti, *The Glass of Form: Mirroring Structures from Chaucer to Skelton* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1991), p. 18. She builds on P. J. Eberle, "The Lovers' Glass: Nature's Discourse on Optics and the Optical Design of the *Romance of the Rose*", *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 46 (1977), 241-62 (pp. 248-55).

emotional disturbances.<sup>498</sup> One may count among such illusions Nature's exposition of dreams and madness (18291vv). Parallels may be drawn to Grosseteste's emanationist view of light as the first corporeal form, diffusing radially.<sup>499</sup> Klassen argues that light, as the first bodily form, is therefore the "source and being of perfection" in corporeality, and that objects which shine approach the original state of perfection: hence their beauty and nobility.<sup>500</sup> Furthermore, this "instantaneous generative power of light applies as a creative principle; it also transfers remarkably well to the specific environment of love at first sight".<sup>501</sup>

As a poem, *RR* falls into some of the worst categories of illusion: it is an account of passionate love-induced madness inspired by the deceptive Perilous Mirror, it is a dream, and it is, above all, a poem. Despite these potential fallacies, Jean's *Mirror* is ultimately aimed at revealing the truth about love and, according to Torti, "lift[ing] the veil of allegory [...] rendering explicit the elements that characterize the dream-vision."<sup>502</sup> Mirrors may be used to extend vision, but apart from God's mirror, those we can access are rarely perfect.<sup>503</sup> From this perspective, dreams, allegories, and mirrors individually and collectively raise epistemological concerns and reflect the human attempt to address them. But learning this truth will depend upon the audience's ability to see through Jean's eyes, to have faith in love and reject reason (10650-8) (and also to hear the story in the vernacular, "le langage de France" (10647)). Jean describes himself as a kind of poetic mouthpiece of Love who is yet to be born after the death of Guillaume. The plucking of the rose is merged with the attainment of truth and the clarity of daylight that come with waking and recording the dream. Jean will lament the loss

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<sup>498</sup> Torti, pp. 18-19.

<sup>499</sup> Discussed in Klassen, pp. 27-8. See Robert Grosseteste, *De luce*, trans. Julian Lock, in Iain M. MacKenzie, *The 'Obscurism' of Light: A Theological Study into the Nature of Light* (Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 1996), 25-33 (p. 25); *De luce*, in *Die Philosophischen Werke des Robert Grosseteste, Bischofs von Lincoln*, ed. Ludwig Baur (Munster: 1912), 51-9.

<sup>500</sup> Klassen, p. 28.

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>502</sup> Torti, p. 19.

<sup>503</sup> See Akbari's comparison of mirrors and allegory, p. 44.

of the earlier poet and fear the difficulty of continuing in his stead, much like the loss of Fair Welcome.

He may momentarily lose hope but concluding the tale brings truth. He may say:

“Et si l'ai je perdue, espoir,  
A poi que je ne desespoir!”,  
Et toutes les autres paroles  
Queles qu'elles soient, sages ou foles,  
Jusqu'a tant qu'il avra cueillie  
Sor la branche vert et fueillie,  
La tres belle rose vermeille,  
Et qu'il soit jours et qu'il s'esveille.  
Puis voudra si la chose espondre  
Que riens ne s'I porra repondre. (10599-608)

“And perhaps I have lost it; I am on the brink of despair” and all the other words, whatever they are, wise or foolish, until he has plucked the fair red rose from the green and leafy branch, and it is daylight and he awakes. Then he will explain the story in such a way that nothing remains hidden. (Horgan 163)

The lover and poet, the rose and its hidden truth, and the dream and story all merge. Jean employs poetry and human understanding, although imperfect, to achieve a synthesis of art and experience.

The resulting creation is comparable to the life that is breathed into Pygmalion's statue.

*Contemplation and Speculation in the Roman de la rose*

The Spring of Life and the carbuncle in Jean de Meun's continuation of *RR* structurally parallel and symbolically oppose the Fountain of Narcissus and the two crystals of Guillaume. In contrast to the earlier fountain, which feigns the appearance of holiness, the Spring of Life is a truly divine marvel. Its waters are self-sustaining and inexhaustible as well as having the power of granting eternal life to those who drink it. The Park represents Eden. There, one will live a holy life, avoiding killing and "following in the footsteps of the Lamb" ["trace l'aiglelet sivant"] (Horgan 317):

En pardurableté vivant,  
Boivre de la bele fontaine  
Qui tan test douce et claire et saine  
Que jamais mort ne recevroiz  
Si tost com d l'eaue bevroiz [...] (20653-8)

There you will live for ever, and drink of the fair spring which is so sweet and bright and healthful that as long as you drink of its water you will never die. (Horgan 317-8)

The stream nourishes a broad and towering olive tree (symbolising the cross, according to Horgan) that is marked as bearing the fruit of salvation, as opposed to the other spring, which is shaded by a small pine and is merely identified in name as the Fountain of Narcissus (20513-27, Horgan 315-6). The carbuncle in the divine Spring of Life is physically and spiritually distinguished from what is later identified for the first time as the Perilous Mirror.

The description of the carbuncle as both a reflective and luminescent material in *RR* builds optical science into divine imagery. The *MED* defines "carbuncle" as a kind of precious stone, especially one that shines in the dark. It can also represent "something excellent or precious, the best of its kind; a shining example (of virtue, etc.)".<sup>504</sup> Its appearance in *RR* blends philosophical, scientific, and Christian imagery and ideas, from the trinitarian unity of its three facets, to the omnipresent and undiminishable rays it produces (20532-41; Horgan 316):

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<sup>504</sup> 'carbuncle, n.', *MED Online* [accessed 27 February 2019].

– Tels est la vertuz de la pierre –  
Vaut autant com les autres .ij.:  
Tels sont entr'euls les forces d'eus;  
Ne les .ij. ne valent que cele,  
Combien que chascune soit bele;  
Ne nus ne les puet deviser (20532-47)

Know too that the virtue of this stone and the reciprocal power of the facets are such that each facet is equal in worth to the other two, and those two are equal to it, no matter how fair each one may be (Horgan 316)

The suggestion of duplicity in the double-faceted mirror of Narcissus is replaced with the round and triple-sided carbuncle, a construction evoking the indissoluble trinity. While the earlier crystals had appeared to generate intense light, the mirror is revealed as dull and obscure in comparison with that of the carbuncle. The carbuncle is an image of perfection: a self-sufficient and solitary source of light (20551vv.), and timelessly exiles the night, creating everlasting and immeasurable day (20551vv.). Its reflective properties are also metaphysical and directly contrast to the effects of the Perilous Mirror: “Once they have seen themselves there, they become such wise masters that nothing that exists will ever be able to deceive them” [“Et euls meïsmes ensement; / Et puis que la se sont veü, / Jamais ne seront deceü / De nulle chose que puisse ester, / Tant I deviennent sage et mestre”] (20578-82; Horgan 316). To see one’s reflection in the carbuncle is to become spiritually illuminated; to see clearly and to understand everything within and without the self and to gain unthwartable wisdom. Furthermore, the facets are all able to reflect the park in its totality, unlike the two crystals. Its rays do not dazzle the eyes but invigorate and bring joy and strength to them (20583-94, Horgan 316-7).<sup>505</sup>

Jean de Meun’s inclusion of the carbuncle, as well as a discourse on the crystals at the bottom of the Fountain of Narcissus, highlights the discrepancy between seeming and genuine truth. Genius explains the falsity of the fountain of Narcissus and its Perilous Mirror, touching on many of the comparisons listed above. Among these is their inability to clearly reproduce a man’s reflection because it depends on sunlight. Those who are ill with love find the water “infinitely brighter than

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<sup>505</sup> This may be contrasted with the unbearable light of heaven in the *Anticlaudianus*.

pure silver”, when in reality, it is ugly, muddy, and does not produce reflections (20435-42; Horgan 314). The two crystals at the bottom of the water each reflect half of the surrounding garden, which Genius sees as a shortcoming, for they are too murky to reflect all and their brightness is the result of the sun striking them at a particular angle (20452-64; Horgan 314-5). In hindsight, the fountain of Narcissus becomes, to use Torti’s phrase, “sinister and dangerous – and above all untruthful” because of its impaired optical qualities.<sup>506</sup>

At this point, Jean’s allegory of human love and physical sight is related to divine love and wisdom. True vision, like love, should allow one to progress toward paradise. The poem as a mirror of love is intended to light the path for lovers. The integration of the carbuncle scene attaches more of a transcendent meaning to the carnal realisation of love at the poem’s ending. The Chain of Being and other tenets of Christian Neoplatonism are included in Nature’s speech. She discusses God’s perfect wisdom and omniscience: He sees all of eternity in his everlasting mirror [“a son miroer pardurable”] (17472, Horgan 269) and nothing can exist that he does not see [“[r]iens ne puet ester qu’il ne voie”] (17393, Horgan 268-9). It is similar to the Mirror of Providence in the *Cosmographia* (*Microcosmus* 11.4-5). The carbuncle is a conduit for divine light that emulates these terms of illumination. It resembles the divine light at the centre of the universe in the *Cosmographia* but is also imagined in more earthly terms. The lover is shown the error of his ways in mistaking the fountain for something divine. Genius’ sermon comparing the false and true mirrors guides the Lover toward higher contemplation.

The difference between hearing about the carbuncle and witnessing it firsthand may be compared to the mirror of Paul in I Corinthians 13:12: “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” [“Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate: tunc autem facie ad faciem. Nunc cognosco ex parte: tunc autem

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<sup>506</sup> Torti, p. 17.



cognoscam sicut et cognitus sum”].<sup>507</sup> (Strong also comments that “glass” is derived from the Greek “esoptron”: “a mirror (for looking into)”.<sup>508</sup>) In the context of dream poetry, experiencing God ‘through a glass, darkly; but then face to face’ may be applied to the process of gaining wisdom, first through imagery and poetry and then in direct contact with heavenly light. The carbuncle is noteworthy for its ability to reflect perfectly. It is the closest Jean gets to describing the divine “face to face”. As Bloomfield explains in reference to *Pearl*, Jerome’s Latin translation, *per speculum aenigmate*, refers to reflection and is an image partially lost in the King James translation.

Rather [Jerome] would have been thinking of the blurred, distorted, and dark reflection offered by a five-inch to eight-inch concave or convex piece of polished metal or stone. And no better or less distorting or less dark mirror would have been available to the vast majority of the *Pearl* poet’s audience in fourteenth-century England.<sup>509</sup>

Clear mirrors would have been at least as rare in Guillaume’s and Jean’s times. The materials of both mirrors, crystal and carbuncle, are of varying degrees of luminescence, perhaps symbolising mortal and divine nature along the Chain of Being, a cosmological image derived from Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus, which became a common symbol in the Middle Ages through inclusion in Macrobius’ *Commentary*.<sup>510</sup> The Chain of Being links man to heaven through a succession of mirrors that descend from heaven to earth. Macrobius conceives of it as Homer’s Golden Chain (*Illiad* VIII.19), a series of illuminated mirrors “from the Supreme God even to the bottomest dregs of the universe there is one tie, binding at every link and never broken” (*Commentary* I.xiv, Stahl 145). This is the same as the “umbilicus” that connects the two levels of the universe in the *Cosmographia*. Pseudo-Dionysius also used the image of the Chain in much the same way as Homer, adding that members of the hierarchy of perfect mirrors are images of God, receiving and reflecting the divine splendor so it may be passed

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<sup>507</sup> Latin text from the Vulgate: *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Clementinam*, ed. A. Colunga and L. Turrado, 6<sup>th</sup> edn [with Strong’s notes], 6<sup>th</sup> edn (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1982)

<sup>508</sup> Strong, note G2072. Strong’s notes are taken from the above edition of the Vulgate.

<sup>509</sup> Josephine Bloomfield, ‘Aristotelian Luminescence, Thomistic Charity: Vision, Reflection, and Self-Love in *Pearl*’, *Studies in Philology*, 108/2 (2011), 165-188 (p. 170).

<sup>510</sup> Stahl, p. 145, 16n.

down the scale (3.2, 165a-b)<sup>511</sup> Also significant is the relationship between sight and personal transformation. Genius' sermon marks the point at which the Lover implicitly learns to destroy illusions, as the remainder of the poem details the storming of the ivory tower.

Moreover, the mirror imagery at this point in *RR* promotes not only human and divine ideas of vision and understanding but also the transformational capacity of love. Worship is tied to moral improvement in Paul's second mirror image: "But we all, with an open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" ["Nos vero omnes, revelata facie gloriam Domini speculantes, in eandem imaginem transformamur a claritate in claritatem, tamquam a Domini Spiritu."] (II Cor. 3:18). Strong notes that the term "changed" in the second verse is translated from the Greek "metamorphoō", "to transform (literally or figuratively "metamorphose"): – change, transfigure, transform."<sup>512</sup> (Strong also explains that here, "glass" is derived from the Greek "katoptrizomai": "To mirror oneself, that is, to see reflected (figuratively): – behold as in a glass."<sup>513</sup>) Both letters to the Corinthians use the motif of improved vision (*speculum* and *speculantes* respectively) to express increased knowledge of God.<sup>514</sup> The Scottish theologian and mystic Richard of St Victor in the mid- to late-twelfth century plays on the terms "speculation" and "speculum", in relation to the climb towards wisdom in *The Mystical Ark*, by cultivating one's contemplative ability to build an allegorical ark of sanctification: "we more aptly and expressly call something speculation when we see by a mirror; but we call it contemplation when we see the truth in its purity without any covering or any veil of shadows".<sup>515</sup> He compares speculative and contemplative men to hills and mountains respectively. The speculative ascent is to lambs climbing hills as contemplation is to rams scaling mountains. Speculation allows for partial sight,

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<sup>511</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius, *Celestial Hierarchy*, Ch. 3.2 (165A-B). For more discussion of this passage, see Akbari, p. 13.

<sup>512</sup> Strong, note G3339.

<sup>513</sup> Strong, note G2734.

<sup>514</sup> Torti, p. 7.

<sup>515</sup> Richard of St Victor, *Mystical Ark*, in *Richard of St Victor: The Twelve Patriarchs, The Mystical Ark, Book Three of the Trinity*, trans. Grover A. Zinn (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), bk V, ch. xiv, pp. 335-6.

enigmatically as in a mirror, alluding to I Corinthians, while contemplation allows one to rejoice in full understanding. There are further differences: contemplation is the result of the climb to attain direct and intuitive knowledge, while speculation is the journey itself, which is made difficult by our reliance upon the “speculum” of the visible world.<sup>516</sup> Although the journey of the Lover in *RR* is not contemplative, the desire for unfiltered contact with the rose may be viewed as echoing the spiritual ascent in the religious allegory of Richard.

Furthermore, the progression of the Lover’s vision in *RR* from his own reflection to contemplation of heaven may be viewed in terms of a mystical elevation of self-love. In Aquinas’ *Commentary on Sentences* (*Scripta super libros Sententiarum*) (1254-56), as Kristeva notes, distinctions 27, 28, and 29 of the third book are devoted to the primacy of self-love: the first step towards knowing God since humans are mirrors made in his image.<sup>517</sup> The mirroring action that is self-love, belief in one’s goodness, is at the base of all other human love.<sup>518</sup> In Distinction 29, Aquinas states that love for another creates unity between the lover and the beloved, and loving another as one would oneself is a process of self-perfection.<sup>519</sup> Kristeva sees this mirroring effect, this identification with the other, as “the hallmark of idealized and omnipresent narcissism.”<sup>520</sup> However, this judgment is not necessarily negative, for Aquinas defines self-love in terms of the sublimation of narcissism, and part of the ontology of the good.<sup>521</sup> Although the Perilous Mirror of *RR* is condemned by Genius, it is the Lover’s moment of self-reflection and redirection of his attention to the rose that instigate the psychological journey, the spiritual realisation, and the fulfilment of the human duty toward Love that

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<sup>516</sup> Richard of St Victor, *Mystical Ark*, XIV, p. 335. See Goldin, p. 8; Torti, p. 21.

<sup>517</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, trans. Leon S. Rondiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 172. Kristeva’s views are discussed at length by Bloomfield.

<sup>518</sup> Bloomfield, p. 185.

<sup>519</sup> The passage (distinction 29, question 2, answer 1) is translated by Rondiez in Kristeva, p. 180. See S. Thomae Aquinatis, *Scriptum Super Sententiis Magistri Petri Lombardi*, 4 vols, ed. Pierre Madonnet and Fabien Moos (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1927-27), III.

<sup>520</sup> Kristeva, p. 180.

<sup>521</sup> Kristeva, p. 181; Bloomfield, p. 185.

transform him. The poem's final lines corroborate Jean's earlier words about the poem's ending. Immediately after plucking the rose, the Lover awakens to daylight. As in the conclusion to Alan's *DPN*, the mirror of Jean's vision is withdrawn to reveal clarity and attainment.

Although *RR* is not a spiritual work, it has both secular and religious elements that will be adopted in the visual themes and motifs of later Middle English dream visions such as the more human romance of *BD*, the metatextual and philosophical journey of *HF*, and the Christian vision of *Pearl*. Its enduring popularity and range of topics including its blend of philosophical allegory and vernacular romance and its synthesis of contemporary optics with epistemological, artistic, and spiritual truth powerfully respond to the concerns of twelfth-century allegories and specifically their criticisms of poetry. Visual ideas are adopted from a range of sources and built into *RR*'s levels of allegory to affirm the power of poetry to express that which is simultaneously visible and invisible, intangible and real, and which nevertheless has a real bearing on human understanding. These ideas culminate in the symbol of the rose.

The *Cosmographia* of Bernardus Silvestris, Alan of Lille's *DPN*, and *RR* are three different types of allegory that informed and shaped the use of visual themes and symbolism in medieval dream poetry. These works encompass a range of ideas about optics and light, both material and immaterial, from natural science to theology and mysticism. They also represent a chronological and thematic trajectory, from the origins of divine light and creation, to the recovery of illumination in a fallen human world, and ultimately to the realisation of a new human and artistic truth. These texts establish a discourse of visual themes that is adopted and transformed in later dream poetry, including visual phenomena such as illumination, actualisation, types of vision, the literary techniques of *enargeia* and *ekphrasis*, and, most significantly, the relationship between art and reality.

## VISION AND VISUAL ART IN MIDDLE ENGLISH DREAM VISIONS

While Chaucer's dream visions are all richly visual, employing *enargeia* as well as drawing upon visual themes, motifs, and ideas both contemporary and from the poetic analogues discussed in the previous chapter, *BD* and *HF* consider specifically the role of vision in terms of mind and body, indicating how poetry informs and is informed by visual experience. In *BD*, memorial images and narrative imagery are central to reconstructing the self and to the memorialisation of a loved one through poetic and intensely visual eulogizing: the articulation and expression of that seen in the mind's eye so that it can be collectively imagined and healing instigated by a process akin to poetic transformation. The poem may be read as an imagistic recollection exploring emotional experience and poetic composition. *HF* also engages in an externalisation of mental processes, this time emphasising the complexities of understanding and interpersonal communication. It adopts an entirely different tone, acerbically using the Eagle's philosophical flight as a cognitive framework for undercutting the epistemological and verbal authority upon which human knowledge is based. In this respect, *HF* takes a skeptical view of the formal nature of poetry and art as thematised in philosophical allegories, taking the form to its extreme and revealing the difficulty or even impossibility of epistemological certainty. Together, the two poems impart the possibilities and limitations of the human power to create and represent ideas through images and words.

The dream vision *Pearl* shares some of the themes of the above texts. Like *BD*, it is about bereavement, only of a child rather than a lover. It also heavily uses imagery of light. In *BD*, the elevated physical and moral beauty of White is signified by association with whiteness and light and is contrasted with the melancholic Black Knight who has lost her. In *Pearl*, the imagery of illumination takes on an overtly spiritual significance: the pearl-maidens who inhabit the New Jerusalem are clothed in the divine light that issues from Christ. Imperfection and "spots" are characteristic of the dreamer,

his limited spiritual awareness, and the mortal world to which he belongs. *Pearl's* vision transcends the limited mortal perspectives of Chaucer's dreamers, even as it highlights the protagonist's human fallibility. It is a spiritual dream vision, distinct from the courtly love vision of *BD* and the philosophical, fanciful flight of *HF*. The *Pearl*-dreamer glimpses the immortal and immutable realm and source of all authority. While *BD* and *HF* highlight the relationship between the natural and artificial in the sublunary sphere and consider the value of art in recording and understanding human experience, *Pearl* shifts from the perspective of earthly craft, or that which is perceived corporeally, to divine art, seen with the outer eye, but understood with inner vision.

The specific sources for Chaucer's and the *Pearl*-poet's knowledge of medieval optics are difficult to pinpoint. Chaucer is likely to have been familiar with the leading natural philosophical theories of the period, while the *Pearl*-poet appears to draw more on theological and mystical treatments of vision. Moreover, as the previous chapter has argued, the analogues of the Middle English dream vision tradition are a conduit for many types of ancient and medieval intellectual discourse and set different precedents for sophisticated poetic treatments of these ideas. There are no allusions to contemporary *perspectiva* in Chaucer's or in the *Pearl*-poet's dream visions as explicit as found in *RR*, though they certainly engage with the ramifications of its ideas. The following analysis focuses upon visual theory, symbolism, and literary techniques that were widespread by Chaucer's time, namely in relation to the role of images—both natural and artificial—in shaping human perception, thought, and communication. Brief comparisons are drawn to contemporary texts such as *LGWP*, Gower's *Confessio amantis*, and Lydgate's fifteenth-century dream vision, *The Temple of Glass*, to elucidate certain visual tropes making a common currency for the genre. The analysis of *Pearl* attempts to extend the examination of vision into a devotional context and considers the interpretive relevance of theories of affective vision, mental illumination, and optical *species* that appear in natural philosophy and theology.

Central to this chapter is the presentation of different ways of seeing in dream poetry, and central to this is the power of words to conjure images, through reading, recollection, and most significantly, imagination; poems thematise the relationship between physical and mental sight, the centrality of sight in experience, and the difference between knowing about love through personal experience and artistic representation.<sup>522</sup> Chaucer may have had an Augustinian notion of the relationship between sight and love in mind when writing his dream visions, especially *BD*. The connection between reading and seeing is affirmed, and seeing soon becomes experiencing. Absence and loss are also underscored in all three visions, and while solutions are not offered, they show how recollection and imagination can reformulate one's view of life and love. Klassen highlights this passage as part of Augustine's profound shaping of medieval Christian thought with respect to a tripartite view of vision.<sup>523</sup> Augustine's typology of vision and love may arguably be applied to philosophical allegory and dream vision as genres: allegory, dreams, and the veiled truths of both, help one see that which is beyond the limits of normal human vision, revealing the harmonious law of love that unites all.

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<sup>522</sup> The latter two points are argued by Klassen, p. 174.

<sup>523</sup> Klassen, p. 5.

The Book of the Duchess: *Breathing Life into Poetic and Personal Phantasia*

There are multiple ways in which seeing and that which is seen can be approached in *BD*. The variety of medieval and contemporary critical approaches to vision in terms of the relationship between art and experience alone indicate the aesthetic and intellectual complexity of the poem. Incorporeal and corporeal sight are thematized through the mental vision associated with memory, reading, falling in love, and sensible phenomena, such as *ekphrasis*, natural beauty, and colour symbolism. Substantial portions of the text, some including moments of visual description, are derivative of French lyric narrative, particularly the *dits* of Machaut and Froissart. It contains more or less direct translations of passages from various French sources, which Palmer estimates to make up about two-thirds of the poem.<sup>524</sup> Considering the text as merely derivative, however, overlooks Chaucer's deep self-consciousness about working within an established literary tradition, conveyed through *BD*'s complex self-reflexivity. Its intertextuality and metatextuality support a parallel presentation of the effect of personal emotional experience and the affective potential of aestheticizing that experience as well as representing the *affect* of art on a listening and seeing audience.

*BD* repeatedly demonstrates the power of *enargeia* in storytelling: the Ovidian tale of Ceyx and Alcyone, the literary *ekphrasis* of the dream bedchamber, and the Black Knight's story of White are among the text's most vivid examples. The source material cited in the text is recalled by the narrator and literally observed on the walls and windows of his dream-bedchamber. It is not so much a repetition of "olde bokes" (*LGWP* F and G 25) but the reader or viewer's response to such stories that is of interest, along with the power of mental vision, through memory and imagination, to shape one's perception of the world. The poem's intertextuality and structure can be interpreted as literary and imagistic *translatio*.<sup>525</sup> Chaucer's dreamer absorbs and responds to literary texts that are then

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<sup>524</sup> Palmer, 'BD as Bricolage', p. 185.

<sup>525</sup> Carruthers, *Craft*, p. 119.



refracted through the dream as dream and as poem. This can be understood in terms of the medieval theory of recollection. Rather than referring to simple memory recall, as is its present use, recollection in medieval thought was a process, a *re-collection* or gathering and combining of memories, whether these are gained from real life or secondhand through art, to produce new insights, potentially even resulting in a visionary experience.<sup>526</sup> The poem's central themes of loss, bereavement, and literary production are translated and recollected across the poem's internal structures.<sup>527</sup>

The poem also acknowledges the discrepancy between the world of the mind and reality. The motif established in the beginning of the poem—of the narrator's attempt to understand love by reading—is echoed in the dream's opposition between the painted bedroom and the active hunt as well as the dreamer's inability to comprehend fully the knight's personal experience (1305-6). The poem portrays art in relation to its closeness to the artist's emotions and potential distance from those of the observer. Critics have highlighted the tale's motifs of distortion, fragmentation, or disruption as well as the resemblances that are created by such shifts: Herzog, following Robertson, focuses on the discrepancy between lived experience and the recreation of it in a work of art, while Horowitz considers the poem's series of *tableaux* as "transcapes".<sup>528</sup>

Above all, there has been a critical interest in the poem's mechanisms of perceiving and transforming perception. Both recollection and composition rely upon following a particular path or mode of understanding and expressing a thought, potentially at the expense of other imagined possibilities. Memory, like art, can never present a total or fully objective picture: *mimesis* is imitative rather than replicative. In *BD*, it is through the paralleling of the dreamer's and the knight's emotional states, and the revelation of the latter's love affair, that the dreamer's personal situation is suggested.

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<sup>526</sup> Carruthers, *Craft*, p. 70.

<sup>527</sup> Helen Phillips, 'Structure and Consolation in *The Book of the Duchess*', *The Chaucer Review*, 16/2 (1981), 107-118 (p. 111), likens the serial and cumulative effect of *BD*'s narrative to an altar triptych.

<sup>528</sup> See D. W. Robertson, Jr., *A Preface to Chaucer* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 51; Michael B. Herzog, 'The Book of the Duchess: The Vision of the Artist as a Young Dreamer', *The Chaucer Review*, 22/4 (1988), 269-281 (p. 269); Horowitz, p. 260.

However, the creation of a partial picture, as when the knight repeatedly accuses the dreamer of not being able to understand the significance of his story (“Thou wost ful lytel what thou menest; / I have lost more than thow wenest” (743-4)), is also a creative opportunity. Chaucer’s narrative personae are personally and creatively enriched by the experiences of their dreams, which are written with the hope of serving a greater end for future audiences. *BD* transcends the limited perception of its characters and its different literary forms in a way that resembles medieval models of recollective memory. Medieval theorists considered composition a part of recollection.<sup>529</sup> The *memoria rerum* was seen as “essential for literary invention” and the composition of new discourse.<sup>530</sup> Although neither the implied cause of the dreamer’s sorrow nor the knight’s loss of White can be undone, *BD* enables emotional healing through memorial transformation and artistic representation.

*BD*’s opening description of the narrator’s waking psychological state details the mental and bodily effects of extreme and prolonged grief, presenting love as a malady that enters the heart through the eyes. The difficulty of curing the narrator’s (and, as later becomes apparent, the knight’s) sorrow may be read in terms of optical theory. As noted above, Augustine describes the will as fulfilling a judiciary role upon things seen with the bodily eye and imagined “phantasies” (IX.6.9). The will, as part of the visual faculty, can also be weakened, as if obscured in darkness (IX.6.32). The sleepless narrator of *BD* is plagued by too much “fantasy”, resulting in a dampening of his will and entrapment in cognitive and emotional darkness. The proliferation of distracting mental images is symptomatic of and a precursor to psychological disorder, although the exact cause of the narrator’s insomnia and burdensome thoughts is conspicuously unspecified, as discussed previously. His claim that lack of sleep causes his mental restlessness and “so many an ydel thought” (4-4) is circumlocutory; rather, it seems more rational to interpret rumination as the primary and continuing cause of his insomnia.

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<sup>529</sup> Carruthers, *Craft*, p. 70.

<sup>530</sup> Carruthers, *Craft*, p. 65.

Emotionally charged images overwhelm the narrator's mind, seemingly spilling over and clouding his physical senses. The following passage illustrates the imbalance between his mind and body and suggests their symbiosis as the cause for the prolongment of his condition: "I have felynge in nothing [...] For sorwful ymagynacioun / Ys alway hooly in my mynde" (11, 14-15). Sorrowful "ymagynacioun", along with the later description of these thoughts as "fantasies" (28), emphasises their visuality. His amazement at his own condition indirectly suggests the paralyzing effects of these visions. His mental vision is heightened while that of the body is blinded.

It would seem that the narrator is already in a kind of dream state, practically detached from his bodily senses and subject to the images that appear in his mind's eye, effectively replacing the surrounding world. The term 'fantasy', while suggesting the negative effects of his condition, also tacitly introduces a departure from, if not total cure for, his sorrow, punning as the word does on the *phantasma* of Macrobian dream theory, in turn linked etymologically to vision as the Greek equivalent of Cicero's Latin term, *visum* (*Commentary* III.2, Stahl 88). 'Fantasy' has a rhetorical and psychological resonance. After Cicero, Quintilian, writing about rhetorical persuasion, used the Roman term *visiones* to translate Greek *phantasiai*. This kind of fantasy is deemed more deliberate and concerns "the images which our imagination (or fantasy) consciously crafts to generate both the "way" and the emotions necessary for effective recollective and cognitive work."<sup>531</sup> According to Quintilian, fantasies and visions are the images of absent things ["*imagines rerum absentium*"] that are imagined so vividly that they seem to appear before the eyes.<sup>532</sup> The idle or daydreaming mind is liable to imagine that one is actively partaking in such visions, journeys, and encounters. He suggests that "Surely it is possible to turn this mental power to some use."<sup>533</sup> Chaucer's use of the term "fantasy" seems to touch on all the

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<sup>531</sup> Carruthers, *Craft*, p. 133.

<sup>532</sup> Quintilian, *De institutione oratoria*, ed. M. Winterbottom (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970); trans. H. E. Butler, Loeb Classical Library 124-127 (London: Heinemann, 1922) VI.xxx-xxxii (Cited in Carruthers, *Craft*, pp. 132-3).

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*

above senses, conveying the fine line between mental images and corporeal objects. The vividness of an image, created through recollection or imagination, coupled with the *intentio* of the past or of rhetoric, can produce something out of virtually nothing.

The importance of emotion should also be kept in mind. Carruthers explains that the term *phantasiai* in medieval rhetoric “is generally reserved for emotionally laden fictions that act powerfully in memory and on the mind”, and in medieval philosophy refers to the mental images that constitute memories.<sup>534</sup> In medieval faculty psychology, *phantasiai* are composed of a *similitudo* or likeness of a remembered object, and *intentio*, a personal experience such as an emotion, attitude, or inclination attached to the given image.<sup>535</sup> It is perhaps possible that a *translatio* of grief through reading and dreaming can support a healing recollection of the sort that Tripp, and Johnson following him, refer to as an “aesthetic sublimation of grief.”<sup>536</sup>

The narrator, overwhelmed by his fantasy, is unable to put his imagination to the sort of constructive use recommended by Quintilian, though Chaucer, as poet, does, by expressing the series of images rhetorically. Mental abstractions are given agency over the comparatively helpless, idle, and dazed narrator and cause him to become blind to anything else (“Al is ylyche good to me” (9)). The list of *contentio* that follows is used to paradoxically affirm the sameness of everything. The pervasiveness of sorrowful imagination is juxtaposed with the glaring absence of a curer, or cure. The metaphor of the physician, through *occupatio*, is a kind of rhetorical-cognitive trick that replicates the play on absence and presence, both physical and memorial. The veil of the metaphorical image is soon revealed to be that and only that. The concluding phrase, “but that is don” (40), lifts the veil to reveal

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<sup>534</sup> Carruthers, *Craft*, p. 14.

<sup>535</sup> Ibid.

<sup>536</sup> Johnson, Jr, pp. 53, 57. Johnson borrows this phrase from an unpublished paper by Raymond P. Tripp, ‘Consolation, Meaning, and Form in *The Book of the Duchess*’, p. 8.

absence. The audience, having visualized the physician, is left with no real image of the curer and no individuating features apart from an intimation of the fine line between reality and thought.

The poem thus far vividly portrays mental vision as having the ability to change how one thinks and perceives reality negatively. The rest of the poem may be read as working through a disturbed emotional state through visual shifts entailed by duplicative recollection and healing creative recollection. Heightened mental activity is thus turned to positive use. The bedroom was considered by medieval theologians a seat of divine contemplation, while reclining with a restless mind was an early stage of mental invention: Bernard of Clairvaux makes this point in relation to Song of Songs 5:2, “Ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat”.<sup>537</sup>

Chaucer’s narrator engages in two activities while lying in bed: reading and dreaming. Reading focuses his wandering mind and acts as a memorial image or literary analogue that will shape the dreamer’s unconscious acts of recollection as the dream unfolds. The Ovidian tale offers the poem’s first major examination of recollection as a literary and personal process. A parallel may be drawn to Geoffrey of Vinsauf’s definition of *transume*, a technique of metaphorical transposition rooted in the likening of a reader’s personal identification with a text to gazing into a mirror (*Poetria nova*, IV, 796-9). Proper transposition enables the text to be readily visible to the mind’s eye (IV, 830-1). The story of Ceyx and Alcyone first proves a distraction, replacing and then channeling idle thoughts: it is meant to “drive the night away”, a kind of “play” or diversion (49-50), and the narrator in jest praises the myth’s advice on sleep (230-247). He does not address the real *res*, or matter of the tale—the more serious resemblance between his condition and Alcyone’s—and instead comically promises a new bed and sheets to Morpheus should he hear his prayer (251). However, the story verbalises and visualises a truth inconceivable to the stunned mind of either Alcyone or the narrator. It is a diversion in its

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<sup>537</sup> See Carruthers, *Craft*, p. 176; Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermons sur le Cantique*, 3 vols, in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. and trans. Paul Verdeyen and Raffaele Fasetta (Paris: Cerf, 1996-2003), II (2003), 23.IV.10; Bernard of Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs*, 3 vols, trans. K. Walsh, II, Sermon 23:10, pp. 34-35.

enjoyability and success in redirecting the narrator's scattered thoughts. One might even read the tale's effect as resembling the role of mnemonic devices in organizing the mind, whether to prevent the sin of *curiositas* or to structure and make memorable an argument. The dream later reformulates the narrator's reading and preoccupations through various means, ultimately forming the material of the poem.

The tale of Ceyx and Alcyone also raises significant issues regarding the role of inner vision (through memory, recollection, and imagination) in grief, and how mental images can function as powerfully as physical ones. The divine power to take on the appearance and personality of the dead effectively allegorises the merits of memory and imagination for dealing with loss. Morpheus creates a sensory component, a *similitudo*, to aid in the realisation of Alcyone's healing *phantasia*, which is enhanced by the ability for the lifelike image to engage with the emotional components of her memories, her *intentio*. Alcyone's vision of the drowned king may also be read as an example of how *translatio* may lead to revelation or consolation. Juno orders Morpheus to "crepe into the body" (144) of the drowned Ceyx in order to confirm his death to Alcyone in a dream. The physical presence of the body is seemingly confirmed, having been borne forth to her from the shore (195-6) and "stood ryght at hyr beddes feet" (199). Morpheus is to

[...] shewe hir shortly, hit ys no nay,  
How hit was dreynt thys other day;  
And do the body speke right soo,  
Ryght as hyt was woned to doo,  
The whiles that hit was alyve. (147-151)

Curiously, after Morpheus-Ceyx speaks to Alcyone and she looks up, we are told "she saw noght." (213) This description initially resembles the half-sleeping, half-waking *phantasma* or *visum* described by Macrobius, which vanishes into thin air and has no bearing on reality (*Commentary* III.7, Stahl 89), but its truthful message aligns it with the oracular and prophetic types (*Commentary* III.8-9, Stahl 90). There is a subtle distinction between seeing with the mind's eye (as in a dream) and corporeal vision

in Alcyone's ambiguous vision of Ceyx. The perceived superiority of corporeal vision—as more direct, more truthful, and more enlightening than distortions of things existing in reality—begins to break down as reader's imagined image of Ceyx seemingly evades Alcyone's bodily eye, yet the truthful message penetrates her soul directly. Furthermore, that she hears but does not see him perhaps brings her as close as she can to the truth without calling attention to the vision as a well-meaning divine forgery, for the real Ceyx would not have been able to come to her.

The inset tale displays a positive view of the mimetic ability of art. By reconstructing or recollecting Ceyx, the gods are given a kind of poetic license which extends beyond mere appearance. The vision, even if it is unclear whether Alcyone has seen it, is interpreted by her as truthful. The apparition provides a function that its object of reference cannot, which is to appear before Alcyone and deliver a message. In addition to external similitude, Morpheus invests the apparition with a fully conceived emotional consciousness. The phrase “swete wyf” conjures memories of their love, advice for the present in forgetting sadness, confirmation of his death, and a gesture towards a happy future in which she will take his advice to “Awake! [and] Let be your sorwful lyf”: to literally and metaphorically open her eyes, and she dies three days later. Ceyx exists as a kind of image that is given life and meaning by Alcyone's apprehension of it. Insight and resolution are gained through the vision's connection of the past to the present by use of an artistic representation of reality, a distortion which paradoxically leads Alcyone to a truthful realisation. Chaucer's omission of Ovid's transformation of the couple into birds keeps the tale within the remit of emotional transformation rather than spiritual transcendence.<sup>538</sup>

While the narrator's reading of Ovid may be interpreted as a demonstration of the creation of mental images from literature, the first scene of the dream lends physical form to narratives in the

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<sup>538</sup> See Cooper's note on Chaucer's avoidance of Ovidian transformation in Helen Cooper, *Oxford Guides to Chaucer: The Canterbury Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 71.

dreamer's literary consciousness, through an elaborate *ekphrasis* upon the walls and stained-glass windows of the dreamer's bedchamber. The glass depicts "hooly al the story of Troye" (326), while the walls show "bothe text and glose / Of al the Romaunce of the Rose" (333-4). The two texts present a picture of divergent types of narrative: classical epic and history on one hand, and vernacular allegorical romance on the other, that inform the medieval poetic imagination. St John argues that the bedchamber is a "place of transition from consciousness to dream [...] in which some of the ideology that shapes the dreamer's thinking is now given substance, in such a way as to make it recognizable to an audience" by employing stained-glass images from popular courtly literature.<sup>539</sup> The *ekphrasis* plays upon the relationship between word and mental image.<sup>540</sup> The transparent and solid medium of glass is appropriate since it "enables Chaucer symbolically to present the images as ideological entities that contain the narrator's consciousness, whilst enabling him to see through them as new paradigms for poetic creation."<sup>541</sup>

The *ekphrasis* also establishes the dreamer's understanding of love, both in real life and as it is presented in literature. Among the numerous classical lovers is Lavinia, whose love for Aeneas is related in the latter parts of the *Roman d'Éneas*. A central image in this text is the wound caused by love's dart, beginning with a glance that penetrates the eye and then the heart.<sup>542</sup> The trope is also fundamental in RR. As Spearing indicates, the necessity of the gaze in enabling love is stressed by Andreas Capellanus in the *De amore*, written in the late twelfth century. In the beginning of the first book, Capellanus writes, "Love is an inborn suffering which results from the sight of, and uncontrolled thinking about, the beauty of the other sex" ["Amor est passio quaedam innata procedens ex visione

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<sup>539</sup> Michael St John, *Chaucer's Dream Visions: Courtliness and Individual Identity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p. 27.

<sup>540</sup> See Ciccone, p. 223.

<sup>541</sup> Ibid.

<sup>542</sup> See *Eneas*, in *Eneas: Roman du XIIIe siècle*, ed. J.-J. Salverda de Grave, 2 vols in 1 (Paris: Édouard Champion, 1925-29), ll. 8158-62. Spearing considers this passage an important source of the trope. A. C. Spearing, *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 9.



et immoderata cogitatione formae alterius sexus”] (I.i.1).<sup>543</sup> The bedroom *ekphrasis* may thus be read as a precursor to *BD*’s presentation of the relationship between sight and love, the way the poetic imagination may help direct uncontrolled thoughts of love.

The chamber is a symbol for creativity and interiority in medieval culture more broadly. It is a space for sleeping as well as contemplative and creative work. Real-life paintings on bedposts and on bedroom walls were sometimes used to inspire and direct monastic “compositional cogitation” of the kind suggested by Bernard of Clairvaux, mentioned above.<sup>544</sup> In his *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, on Psalm 25:8, he likens devotional recollection to showing the paintings within “ever-adorned bedroom of my conscience” [“ornatum exhibeam thalamum conscientiae”], a *templum spiritualis*.<sup>545</sup> If Chaucer’s use of the chamber resonates with this symbolism, it does so in the more secular context of memory relating to the dual themes of artistic production and love’s malady. The *ekphrasis* shows images with seeming clarity, a seeming illustration of memory and imagination at their most capable. Chaucer would have read in *RR* how glass and other reflective, translucent, or transparent materials can improve, distort, or obscure vision, though the dreamer delightedly appreciates the pictorial detail and physical finesse of the windows:

And sooth to seyn, my chambre was  
Ful wel depeynted, and with glas  
Were al the wyndowes wel yglased  
Ful clere, and nat an hole ycrased,  
That to beholde hyt was gret joye. (321-5)

Beams shine through the glass, perfectly illuminating the bedroom, perhaps symbolising the dreamer’s act of recollection, which essentially presents, or actualises, images stored in the memory. Furthermore, the light that is filtered through the glass also makes the walls visible; the tales are mutually illuminating. Classical narratives may be seen informing the dreamer’s perception of the

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<sup>543</sup> Andreas Capellanus, *De amore*, in *Andreas Capellanus On Love, with facing page translation by P. G. Walsh* (London: Duckworth, 1982). Citations are by book, chapter, and line. For further analysis, see Spearing, *Poet as Voyeur*, p. 7.

<sup>544</sup> Carruthers, *Craft*, p. 178.

<sup>545</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs*, 46.3. Discussed in Carruthers, *Craft*, p. 86.

newer tradition represented by *RR* and painted upon the walls. The smoothness and perfection of the glass suggests the beautiful and intricate work that can be achieved through intense personal recollection. Whereas the narrator had read by candlelight to drive away idle fantasies, his reading now illuminates the dark room with more substance than his earlier thoughts.

The chamber *ekphrasis* suggests another important aspect of aesthetic appreciation. Johnson argues that the poem emphasizes the inescapability of the effects of “olde bokes”, the dream forcing upon him the “key of remembrance”, as described in *LGWP* (17-26), which will be detailed in *HF*.<sup>546</sup> While this is broadly true—the entire poem repeatedly echoes and transforms literary material—the *ekphrasis* in this case is noteworthy as part of a highly architectural and symbolic edifice that the dreamer soon exits.<sup>547</sup> Memory involves a “presentation” that can be powerful and lifelike at best, but recollection is a tool for creation, not creation itself. If the dreamer is to create new art, he must depart from the array of literary conventions that metaphorically adorn his mind and literally decorate his dream-chamber. The *ekphrasis* brings literary memories to the forefront of the dreamer’s mind, and, as Ciccone argues, into the present experience of the plot: “however fragmented their presentation, the source narratives from the past are painted into the present of the dream.”<sup>548</sup> The images create a “language” for the dream, lending it consistency but also disrupting the narrative’s focus on the narrator through allusions to other material and ultimately “[setting] the stage for the man in black’s revivification of the dead White, that is, for reading the past into the present and the present into the past.”<sup>549</sup> This is a ‘language’ that is emphatically visual, revealing the simultaneous metonymic and metaphorical flexibility of graphic symbolism that can generate new insights and create new meanings through transposition. A stained-glass image is both an object and a representation, while its

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<sup>546</sup> Johnson also argues, “[t]he Dreamer as it were is part of his dream in a more comprehensively psychological way than in a mechanical allegory [such as *RR*].” Johnson, p. 55.

<sup>547</sup> For more on *ekphrasis* as a physical and symbolic containing structure, see Barbetti, pp. 105-122.

<sup>548</sup> Ciccone, p. 208.

<sup>549</sup> *Ibid.*

transparency allows one to see both in relation to things beyond it. The dream does not make sense of the narrator's dilemma rationally but imagistically, filtering tropes such as words and images, hart and heart, light and darkness through different narratives that foster new ways of seeing and understanding.

*The Dreamer Led Astray: The Forest and the Whelp*

The hunt foregrounds the poem's thematization of self-reflection as a process of adjusting our ways of seeing. It centres upon the pursuit of a hart by Octavian and his courtly retinue, momentarily joined by the dreamer before the quarry escapes. The transition from the chamber to the hunt is noteworthy in visual terms because it shows the dreamer first as an observer of his personal interior landscape, and then as a participant in another narrative acted out in real time. In terms of its literary references, the material is representative of contemporary practices, more so than *RR* and still more than the narratives upon which the *romans de Troie* are based. The dreamer has physically progressed from historical and allegorical love stories to romance, but the hart still evades capture, scrutiny, and metaphorically speaking, understanding.<sup>550</sup>

The dreamer's transition also follows a pattern of venturing away from familiar genres and discourses. He momentarily joins the courtly allegorical narrative of the hunt but soon diverges from it, instead following the whelp into a forest that is distinct from the human and courtly concerns and narrative register. The hart's escape along "a privy way" (382) creates a sense of misdirection, concealment and absence that foils the allegorical love quest. The poem mentions simple visual motifs without stating what lies behind them explicitly, leaving dream symbols to be interpreted by the reader.

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<sup>550</sup> See James I. Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the French Love Poets: The Literary Background of The Book of the Duchess* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), p. 157: the hunt (344-386) is based upon *Paradys*, ll. 903-953, and a reference to Octavian occurs in Machaut's *Behaingne* (421).

This enacts the Macrobian idea of images in dreams speaking directly to the mind and the difficulty of dream interpretation. The convergence of narrative strands and allegorical registers within the dream's final image of the white tower (1318) is testament to this. The visual symbols in *BD*, like the mnemonic architecture of medieval rhetoricians and monks, convey polyvalent meanings that cannot be described as plainly allegorical. Chaucer's exploration of the relationship between literary creation and personal psychological growth and his use of imagery to navigate aesthetic and mental spaces may be considered part of the poem's main achievement—and also why the poem's images, like the “hart/heart”, resist hermeneutic capture and elucidation.

The parallel significance of the “hart/heart” image becomes clearer in the episode with the Black Knight which reveals the search for the hart as a diagnosis of the malady of the knight's (and the dreamer's) own heart. Before the “hart/heart” images merge, representing a clarified reflection upon grief, the dreamer enters another literary dream space, the philosophical love vision, departing from previous narratives that have thus far had limited success in helping him see and understand his relationship to love. A parallel may be drawn between the natural hideaway, visually and metaphorically concealed from man and what may be read as his artistic contrivances (i.e., the trained hunting dogs that respond to the horn's signals, 375-7), and the dark Cave of Sleep where Juno's messenger finds Morpheus (163-71). In the Ovidian tale, this descent into darkness, sleep, and mystery eventually leads to insight but with the help of a non-human messenger. The dreamer is later led by the whelp to a vivid sensual realm in which he observes the operations of the universe within the earthly sphere's natural forms and law of *kinde*. In a sense, the substitution of Octavian for the whelp as a kind of dream guide leading to a *locus amoenus* may suggest a symbolic return to the Golden Age, a time when humankind existed in harmony with love, and metaphorically with his soul/heart. Inspiration for the whelp may have been found in Machaut's *Behaingne* (25-27, 1204-11) in which the narrator is comically exposed by the dog for eavesdropping on its lamenting owner, and to a lesser extent, the eponymous

dream guide of Machaut's *Dit dou lyon* (324-331, 499-509) who defends the dreamer through a perilous forest and whose ears join together when stroked, like Chaucer's whelp:<sup>551</sup>

And I hym folwed, and hyt forth wente [i.e., the whelp]  
Doun by a floury grene wente  
Ful thikke of gras, ful softe and swete.  
With floures fele, faire under fete,  
And litel used; hyt semed thus,  
For both Flora and Zephirus,  
They two that make floures growe,  
Had mad her dwellynge ther, I trowe; (397-404)

The allusions to Flora and Zephirus above mark an understated return to or glimpse of the Golden Age, when the landscape is made meaningful by its natural properties and inhabitants (as opposed to the hunting scene, which emphasises human use of nature). These allusions reflect the narrator's early description of the book he reads prior to falling asleep which contains poems "[t]o read and for to be in mynde / Whyle men loved the lawe of Kynde" (55-6), as opposed to tales "[o]f quenes lyves and of kynges" which are among "things smale" (58-9).

The whelp leads the dreamer to the knight, and metaphorically to the *heart*, of his and the dreamer's shared sorrow. Its youth and gentle manner may be contrasted with the powerful hunting hounds whose course is diverted. Shoaf interprets Chaucer's hart as an "image of the penitential self" and the hunter as confessor in contemporary sources.<sup>552</sup> In the *locus amoenus* scene there is an emphasis on renewal through cyclical, and healing through forgetting. "Forgetting" the poverty of winter is emphasised twice within the space of a few lines (410, 413), though the second use of the verb appears to universalise the mood, subtly applying the theme to the many images of love's sorrow in the poem before replacing it with repeated waxing, the colour green, and sweetness (410-15).<sup>553</sup>

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<sup>551</sup> Wimsatt, *Chaucer and French Love Poets*, p. 158.

<sup>552</sup> R. A. Shoaf, "The Sorrowful H(e)art: Penitential Lore and the Hunt Scene in Chaucer's *The Book of the Duchess*", *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 78/3 (1979), 313-324, (p. 315).

<sup>553</sup> This passage seems closely modeled on RR but Chaucer's omission of Earth's cloak makes the description appear more direct and less contrived. Cf. Chaucer's *Rom.*, fragment A, 51-70. Earth dons "a newe shroud" with "hewes an hundred payre / Of gras and flouris, ynde and pers, And many hewes ful dyvers" (64-68).

The forest, at first seen in terms of human use, is now viewed as a natural entity. Chaucer presents the natural world as a living *ekphrasis* that allows the dreamer to see it as itself and as indicative of universal processes. One may compare this to the artistically rendered bedchamber at the beginning of the dream, which in itself is beautiful but static and which depends on human interpretation for meaningful value. The symbolic characterisation of the forest poetically and literally dwarfs humanity. The trees, which receive the most elaborate *enargeia*, resemble those in RR, though there are a few key visual differences that affect their symbolic resonance:

And every tree stood by hymselfe  
Fro other wel ten foot or twelve ---  
So grete trees, so huge of strengthe,  
Of fourty or fifty fadme lengthe,  
Clene withoute bowgh or stikke,  
With croppes brod, and eke as thikke --  
They were nat an ynche asonder ---  
That hit was shadewe overall under. (419-426)

Wilcockson links this passage to lines 1361-82 of RR, describing the idyllic “hortus inclusus” (equivalent to Chaucer’s *Rom. A.* 1391-1403).<sup>554</sup> Phillips and Havely also identify the details of the trees as echoing almost the same passage of RR (1363-84).<sup>555</sup> The lines from RR are part of the description of the Garden of *Deduit* prior to the Fountain of Narcissus episode (1362-79; Horgan 22; Chaucer’s *Rom. A.* 1391-1400). Chaucer’s translation of the passage suggests that if he had access to RR by the time he was writing *BD*, his magnification of the trees in the latter poem would have been deliberate. In maintaining the equal distancing between the trees, the underlying sense of cultivation as a metaphor for natural perfection remains.

Perhaps the most striking revision is the trees’ absence of branches. The passages describe branches toward the canopies that knit together to provide uniform shade, though it is never said that there are no lower branches. Tall trees have a tendency to self-prune, allowing lower leaves and

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<sup>554</sup> Wilcockson, ‘Explanatory Notes’ to *BD* ll. 402-33. Wilcockson also links Chaucer’s reference to Albus in *BD* to RR 12790-96 (Horgan 197).

<sup>555</sup> Footnote to *BD* 417-26 in *Chaucer’s Dream Poetry*, ed. Phillips and Havely.

branches to die off to foster the strength of leaves and branches that have access to sunlight at the canopy, though whether medieval audiences would have been aware of this is uncertain. Phillips and Havelly note that “the regularity and abundance of the forest, in a pre-Romantic culture, symbolize perfection.”<sup>556</sup> The trees can be read as idealisations of nature’s domain over the mortal world and its connection to higher divinity, and the description may act as a visual motif of this. The absence of branches may also contribute to the imagery of perfection. This locale, with its nourishing and strong trees, may be interpreted as the symbolic heart of nature, giving life to everything around it. It vivifies the dreamer’s senses and leads him to see and conceptualise his surrounding world differently. The dreamer’s corporeal sight is overloaded by the beauty, plenty, completeness, and eternal thriving of creation. As such, Chaucer encourages the audience to imagine nature with the help of detailed *enargeia*, which overcomes notions of selfhood and human contrivance through a philosophical allegory that strives to exceed the limits of language to understand divine love and beauty.

### *Recollecting White*

So far, the narrator’s dream has revealed a series of ekphrastic motifs and episodes that transmute the dreamer’s perspective, allowing him to forget his own suffering and eventually see it more clearly as it is expressed by the knight. One may interpret the dreamer’s trajectory as following the Augustinian categories of vision leading to love. He has experienced the first kind of vision, bodily sight of letters, in the bedroom while awake, and approached the second kind, the spirit’s ability to think of an absent “neighbour”, by adorning his dream bedchamber with literary words and images. He then encounters the idea of absence through the symbol of the hart. This indirect approach to the heartland of his

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<sup>556</sup> Ibid.

sorrow has, however, failed to provide solace. Departing from this pattern of imagery, he enters the *locus amoenus*, where his perspective turns to the universal and eternal, and it is this *ekphrasis*, a kind of *ductus*, that leads to the grieving knight as a reflection of his own sorrow, eliminating the metaphorical distancing of the “hart/heart” pun. The description of the Black Knight sitting beneath a huge oak develops the earlier metaphor of shade as a nurturing phenomenon, transforming another parallel image, hart’s hideaway, a sanctuary, into a negative image of darkness: sorrow, isolation, spiritual, mental, and bodily blindness, and death. The knight’s black dress adds to the apparent darkness and sense of void as well. He literally and metaphorically turns his back to the tree:

I was war of a man in blak  
That sat and had yturned his bak  
To an ook, an huge tree. (445-47)

The rhyme of “black” and “back” is repeated again a few lines later (457-8), emphatically associating darkness and the inability to see. The knight’s immersion in his thoughts and obliviousness to his surroundings is made apparent by the dreamer’s approach. The description of the dreamer as having “stalked” (478) the knight terminologically links back to the hart hunting and informs the confrontation of the obscurity surrounding the dreamer’s and the knight’s losses.

The dreamer sees an image of grief that reflects his own pre-somnium life state. His description of the knight may be compared to the dreamer’s “many an ydel thoght” (4); taking “no kep / Of nothing” (7); and “sorwful ymagynacioun” which “ys always hooly in my mynde” (14-15). Furthermore, the knight’s “ryght yong” age (454), juxtaposed with his complexion “Ful pitous pale and nothyng red” (470), creates the same natural aberration that affects the dreamer:

Hit was gret wonder that Nature  
Myght suffre any creature  
To have such sorwe and be not ded (467-9; cf. 16-21)

It is “agaynes kynde” (17) or unnatural to survive in such a way and the knight’s posture—back to the oak—visually complements the point. Identification of the tree’s species subtly introduces the



vocabulary of the human world, which will then lead to a human invention, the complaint (463, 471), which is devoid of the metaphorical “colours” of music.

The lady, associated with literal and spiritual light, embodies physical and spiritual purity. Her absence results in the absolute darkening of the knight’s world, as he rehearses in his tuneless song, echoing the “won/wonder” of the dreamer:

I have of sorwe so gret won  
That joye gete I never non,  
Now that I see my lady bright,  
Which I have loved with al my might,  
Is fro me ded and ys agoon. (475-79)

But darkness also has the potential to lead to light. There is hope, as for even in the Ceyx and Alcyone story help is located in the darkness of Morpheus’ cave. The knight’s dialogue with the dreamer can be read, as Johnson argues, as an aesthetic fascination leading to a sublimation of grief.<sup>557</sup> Moreover, as Carruthers indicates, a dimming or blocking of light allows one to see *more clearly* something that is inside and, as such, was associated with intensive memory work in monastic practice.<sup>558</sup> Seeking solitude can facilitate this practice, though the utility of avoiding crowds is disputed.<sup>559</sup> The duplicity of *curiositas* (“distraction or “extreme remembering [...] both overly much and overly little”),<sup>560</sup> may be understood as paralleling that of love: love at its worst (typically erotic) clouds judgment and plagues the inner and outer senses, while the apex of divine love is associated with perfect clarity of vision and understanding. While Albertus Magnus in his commentary (written c. 1260) on Aristotle’s *On Memory* advises withdrawing from public spaces and bright lights to a secluded and dark spot to conduct recollective work,<sup>561</sup> the Black Knight’s withdrawal arguably shows the negative effects of recollection operating without the moderation of reason. However, the knight’s solitude may be read as simply a

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<sup>557</sup> This is Johnson’s central point.

<sup>558</sup> See also Carruthers, *Craft*, p. 216 for examples.

<sup>559</sup> See Carruthers, *Craft*, p. 99 on Aquinas’ conflation of solitude and solitude.

<sup>560</sup> Carruthers, *Craft*, p. 99.

<sup>561</sup> Albertus Magnus, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Parva naturalia: De memoria et reminiscencia*, ed. Albert Borgnet, in *Alberti Magni Opera Omnia*, 38 vols (Paris: Ludovicum Vivès, 1890-99), IX, p. 108. Discussed in Carruthers, *Craft*, p. 216.

hermitic act, seeking the shade of the huge tree, far away from the hunt, in order to devote himself to and preserve his heart's image of White, the brightness and purity of which elevate her to an almost divine status in his mind's eye. He refuses to let go of her memory:

And yet she syt so in myn herte  
That, by my trouthe, y nolde noight  
For al thys world out of my thoght  
Leve my lady; noo, trewely! (1108-11)

The dreamer similarly resembles a hermit ailed by *curiositas*, and retreating into the realm of “ydel thoght” (4) and “sorwful ymagynacioun” (14) to the extent that he will “take no kep / Of nothing” and “have felynge in nothyng” (6-7, 11), thereby occupying his own melancholic and literal darkness (as the events leading to the dream are after sunset). The only source of light for the dreamer we know about was that which allowed him to read the romance, for even his “physicien but oon” seems far removed. St John describes the imagery of darkness associated with the knight as establishing a crucial visual context through which Chaucer considers the opposition between “the darkness of negative sentiment” and “the light of nobility and reason.”<sup>562</sup> This interpretation corresponds with the tale's account of the narrator's and the knight's experiences of love as an illness which injures the heart through the eyes and, in doing so, allows vivid fantasies to dominate without the operation of reason to keep them in check.

The knight's pain, both in courting White and in her absence, is repeatedly imagined as an illness of the heart, so uniting with the imagery of the hunt. The departure of his spirits as he swoons is counteracted by the entrance of blood in his heart to warm his body (488-90) because it is according to “kynde” that blood aids his body's “membre principal” (494-5), but this results in a dramatic change in his physical complexion, with the blood departed from his limbs causing his “hewe [to] change and wexe grene / And pale” (497-8). His sorrows also “lay so colde upon hys herte” that “through hys sorwe and hevye thoght” “[...] he had wel nygh lost hys mynde” (509, 511); he does not sense the

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<sup>562</sup> St John, p. 30.

dreamer's approach. St John argues that Machaut's symbolic hart pun draws upon Aristotelian psychology of the intellect whereby the heart, the organ associated with the perception and retention of forms and images, is a *sensorium*.<sup>563</sup> The twin images of the hart and heart merge when the knight vocalises White's death and the 'hart hunting' comes to a close (1309-13). Having descended into the depths of memory, the knight recollects and resurfaces by confronting the death of White. The dreamer, meanwhile, awakens with a new sense of his own perspective that allows him to overcome his initial paralysis.

The knight's explanation of his education in love adopts the French motif of love as a learned art. The beginning of Machaut's *Remede* (26-30) and the God of Love's decree in *RR* are two influential examples of such a characterisation.<sup>564</sup> The flexibility of visual metaphors, such as painting and illumination, creates complex associations between bodily and aesthetic experience, as well as the affinities between divine love and idealised erotic love. The knight's account of his experience of love brings craftsmanship and deeply affective and transformative experience into proximity. He likens his younger self to a blank canvas, an image derived from the *Remede*.<sup>565</sup> Love is a craft that, like a tool or a skill, the lover as craftsman will work to improve in his execution and control over his materials. Love, however, is famously capricious, even for the most skilled practitioners. The image of the knight as a craftsman of love is reversed, leaving him as the blank slate upon which the craft will be impressed, as on "a whit wal or a table" (780) upon which "men wil portreye or pente" (784). In *BD*, however, the boundaries between craft and real life as well as that between art and artist is blurred. Refining skill in love renders the artist a part of his own art.

This reciprocity of subject and object, art and artist, accords with the actual experience of love, showing how the art of love is as much about connecting with someone else as harnessing the means

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<sup>563</sup> St John, p. 50.

<sup>564</sup> The Machaut allusion is suggested by Wimsatt, *Chaucer and French Love Poets*, p. 160.

<sup>565</sup> See St John, pp. 49-50.

to create that connection from within. It also highlights love and art as two forms that can significantly change the practitioner of either. The dazzling sight of White, embossed upon the knight's mind and later housed within his heart, emphasises the affective nature of such mental images. His memories are the source of intense emotional upheaval as well as being the inspiration for the knight's lyric composition. However, he also struggles to comprehend and represent her beauty:

Me lakketh both Englyssh and wit  
For to undo hyt at the fulle;  
And eke my spirites be so dulle  
So gret a thyng for to devyse.  
I have no wit than kan suffise  
To comprehende hir beaute.  
But thus moche dar I sayn, that she  
Was whit, rody, fressh, and lyvely hewed,  
And every day hir beaute newed. (989-906)

The knight eventually constructs White's sublime beauty for his audience, now the dreamer, through conventional poetic metaphors, courtly and religious. His descriptions rehearse the ability of art to display to others a formulaic version of that retained in the mind's eye. He employs memory, imagination, and wit to conjure, through *enargeia*, a vision of White that mingles the spiritual and the material, conveying the presence of a truly ideal and idealised beloved in human form. His achievement is a set of tropes using the imagery of overwhelming brilliance. The extent to which her external and internal beauty surpasses other women, even those among "the fayrest companye / Of ladyes that evere man with ye / Had seen togedres in oo place" (807-10), is explained through a light metaphor:

Ys fairer, clerer, and hath more lyght  
Than any other planete in heven,  
The moone or the sterres seven (821-23)

There are numerous other passages associating White with brightness, lustre, and perfection. Her hair is formulaically likened to actual gold (857); she is to all men "lyk to torche bryght / That every man may take of light / Ynogh, and hyt hath never the lesse" (963-5). These descriptions of her, like Alceste and the daisy in *LGW*, are particularly redolent of descriptions of the Lady in Marian literature and

liturgy, and are used to sublimate the description of the beloved.<sup>566</sup> Among a crowd of ten thousand she is “a chef myroure of al the feste” (973-4); as outstanding in the narrator’s eyes as “the soleyne fenix of Arabye” (981-2), a Marian motif that is also used thematically in *Pearl*.<sup>567</sup> The description of her neck is ekphrastic, developing the ivory tower metaphor more elaborately than any of the other images:

[...] whit, smothe, streght, and pure flat,  
 Wythouten hole or canel-boon,  
 As be semynge had she noon.  
 Hyr throte, as I have now memoyre,  
 Semed a round tour of yvoyre,  
 Of good gretnesse, and noght to gret.  
 And goode faire White she het;  
 That was my lady name ryght.  
 She was bothe fair and bryght;  
 She hadde not hir name wrong. (942-51)

The image of a perfectly round white tower functions as a proximation of her physical and moral beauty, which are pictured in the knight’s mind but beyond his power to describe more directly. This passage has been read as containing imagery from Machaut’s *Behaingne* with two additional references to whiteness, reflecting Song of Songs 7:4, “thy neck is a tower of ivory”, an image also used in Marian literature.<sup>568</sup>

By the end of the dream, the image of the tower and the name White are transformed from synecdoche to memorial icon. At this point, however, it is apparent that the knight’s memory of White is formed by the cumulation of proximal poetic images that are symbolically derived primarily from other literary sources, showing how exposure to art lends coherence and meaning to personal experience. The images, colours, and materials in the above descriptions create an *ekphrasis* visible to the inner eye, echoing the dreamer’s externalisation of literary images in his dream bedroom. Through the imagery of narrative, the knight gives form to his memories and renders the absent White visible.

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<sup>566</sup> *Chaucer’s Dream Poetry*, ed. Phillips and Havelly, p. 284.

<sup>567</sup> Cf. *Pearl* in *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, ed. Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007), VIII.430. (All references to *Pearl* are from this edition unless otherwise noted.)

<sup>568</sup> Phillips and Havelly note the Machaut reference and indicate Wimsatt’s note on Song of Songs. (See *Chaucer’s Dream Poetry*, note to BD ll. 939-60; 946. Also see Wimsatt, ‘The Apotheosis of Blanche in the *Book of the Duchess*’, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 66/1 (1967), 26-44.

But as the knight tells the dreamer, no man can cure the sorrow that has completely shattered his body and mind, “That maketh my hewe to fal and fade / And hath myn understondynge lorne” (564-5), and likewise the remedies of Ovid, Orpheus, Dedalus, Hippocrates, and Galen (568-72), representing poetry, mythical music and invention, and science, ultimately fall short.

Nevertheless, the dream vision’s presentation of love and grief in relation to a mind’s struggle to contain mental images when they are attached to extreme emotions can also be interpreted in terms of medieval optics and psychology of vision. Collette highlights the medieval view of love as a phenomenon whereby one becomes overwhelmed by internalising the visual *species* of the beloved, which will be discussed below in relation to *Pearl*.<sup>569</sup> The physics of sight go hand in hand with the emotional effects of love, which begins with the gaze. As Collette indicates, “[d]esire for an object or for a person can arise from the power of *species* to affect a gazer’s sight, judgment, or will”, making one’s ability to deal with the effects of these *species* crucial.<sup>570</sup> The overwhelming of the knight’s senses and sudden departure of the source of their fixation leaves the knight with a particular challenge of recollection, for he is liable to fall victim to too much fantasy. Rather than focusing the will, as one may do to curb *curiositas*, the dreamer’s conversation with the knight results in an artistic commemoration of her in the concluding image of the ivory castle. The knight, suffering first from the malady of love and then of grief, cannot reconcile his heart’s image of her with the reality that it no longer corresponds to a living reality independent of his memory. His image of White is no longer mimetic—his love and artistic skill must strive to construct something more substantial in her absence. The proliferation of mental images and neglect of the physical world, including the body, draws a parallel between the knight and the dreamer.<sup>571</sup>

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<sup>569</sup> Collette, p. 20.

<sup>570</sup> Ibid.

<sup>571</sup> Compare the dreamer, ll. 6-29 and the knight, 460-70, 488-511.

The power of White's visual *species* in inspiring the knight's love may be read in relation to the juxtaposition of the natural and pure, the artificial and illusory. White's eyes reflect her purity and *pitee*:

Hir eyen semed anoon she wolde  
Have mercy – fooles wenden soo –  
But hyt was never the rather doo. (866-8)

The Knight's recollection of her merciful gaze, "hir owne pure lokyng", "no countrefeted thyng" implicitly suggests her bodily eye and, by association, her soul, as among Nature's personal best, for she "Had mad hem [i.e., her eyes] opene by mesure / And close [...]" (873-7). Her gaze enables her connection to the dreamer and appears to link both their souls in mutual understanding:

Hyr lokyng was not foly sprad  
Ne wildely, thogh that she pleyde;  
But ever, me thocht, hir eyen seyde,  
'Be God, my wrathe ys al foryive!' (874-877)

This is opposed to the dubious workings of Fortune, "An ydole of false portraiture" and "the epitome of deceit" (626). The great trickster is described as "the monstres hed ywrien, / As fylthe over-strawed with floures" (628-9) and "ever laughynge / With oon eye, and that other wepyng" (633-4). Fortune's duplicitous gaze contrasts with White's and creates a disturbing image of what will disrupt the lovers' bond, signified by the exchange of *species*.

White's visual absence and presence have immediate mental and physiological effects on the knight and are intimately linked to his sanity. From the beginning of his complaint, the paradox of observing the quality of absence is presented. The dreamer overhears the knight proclaim what first appears to be a salute to a lady seen physically or mentally before him but then revealed to be dead: "Now that I see my lady bryght, / Which I have loved with al my might, / Is fro me ded and ys agoon" (477-9). Even while she is alive, her absence from a feast makes a fellowship seem to the knight as naked "as a corowne without stones." (980) The crown, meant to display and unify precious stones, symbolically loses its significance without them, and to an extent, so does the knight when the object

of his gaze disappears. In life, she had been the knight's virtual physician, echoing the poem's early imagery. The sight that had wounded him with love (883) also momentarily heals him:

So mochel hyt amended me  
That whan I saugh hir first a-morwe  
I was warished of al my sorwe  
Of al day after; til hyt were eve  
Me thoghte nothyng myghte me greve,  
Were my sorwes never so smerte. (1100-07)

After she dies, the potential for the curative sight of her face is lost. The inversion of the knight's world after her death is explained in a series of *oppositio* that reinforces the polarity of light and dark, joy and sorrow, health and illness, and significantly, wit and folly: "To derke ys turned al my light, / My wyt ys foly, my day ys nyght" (609-10). The insertion of wit and folly between two images of light and dark and an enveloping rhyme of light and night creates a strong association between the physical and mental 'lights' of sense and understanding. Her sole existence for the knight as a memory in effect causes his mental images of her to have no external, sensible counterpart. Memories, however vivid, become imaginings, and such images that can no longer provide an anticipatory hope of meeting with the beloved instead intensify her absence.

The dream poem's examination of vision and the process of envisioning as curative is worthy of careful consideration in relation also to the connection between sight, love, thought, and will emphasized in medieval theology. As mentioned, in the theological context, ideas about divine love are calibrated in terms of an ideal love possible between mortals. The metamorphosis of the lover into a white tower, the kind of transformation omitted in Chaucer's retelling of the Ceyx and Alycone tale, also seems to suggest something more transcendent about love, sight, and knowledge. Augustine conceives of thought as involving a union of subject and object, or lover and beloved, and this union is brought about in conversation (*De Trinitate*, IX, 7.7-10).<sup>572</sup> BD's motif of enlightenment through

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<sup>572</sup> Augustine considers specifically the role of the will in knowledge, while Aquinas focuses on the contemplative *intellectus*. On parallels with Aquinas, see Rowan Williams, *The Wound of Knowledge: Christian Spirituality from the New*



word and vision, expressed first in the tale of Ceyx and Alcyone, then reflected in a series of dream scenes that encourage new ways of seeing via different poetic forms, may be understood as reaching its apex in conversation with the Black Knight and his memorialisation of White in word and image that ultimately create clarity in understanding and love. St John argues that “the images which constitute his memory of his beloved are the product of this language overriding any previous empirical experience of reality.”<sup>573</sup> While the poem seems to engage with this possibility, the admission of White’s death (1309), and the dreamer’s awakening (1324), appear instead to confirm the triumph, however painful, of image and language in arriving at a clarified view of reality, and so the potential for finding new beginnings rather than endings in representationally transformed reality.

Critics have connected the knight’s eventual ability to describe White with gradual consolation and revivification of her memory. The metaphors that had once served as indexes of a superior beauty are suddenly insufficient to bring him joy or to give her memory ‘life’. A new kind of image must be created in order to disrupt the old modes of thought and expression. Ellmann and Horowitz consider the entombing and imprisoning effect of the knight’s memory of White on his psyche and the narrative respectively.<sup>574</sup> As the chapter on sound in *BD* has argued, the vague refrain (743-4, 1137-8, and 1305-6 with minor variations) allows the knight to continue his story without explaining the significance of the couplet, and thus forestall his own verbalisation of White’s death. This inability or reluctance to apprehend the unspeakable or unpicturable source of grief results in the repetition of memories and old thought patterns and prevents the curative process of recollection as creation. The simultaneous confirmation and realisation of her death by the knight and the dreamer, respectively, lifts the veil of

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*Testament to St John of the Cross* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1990), p. 125. Also see Klassen, p. 33 on Aquinas’ view of contemplation as a primarily intellectual activity in the *Summa theologiae*.

<sup>573</sup> St John, p. 58.

<sup>574</sup> See Maud Ellmann, ‘Blanche’, in *Criticism and Critical Theory*, ed. Jeremy Hawthorn (London: Edward Arnold, 1984), 99-110 (p. 100); Horowitz, p. 271. The latter argues that the use of language and idealisation to substitute for the absence of White creates a prison of narrative for the Black Knight whereby the “object of desire is at the epicenter of this ‘mimetic circuit’” (p. 272).

stylised tropes, conventional images, and static memories to reveal the truth of the matter. As a result, the admission of her death releases the dreamer and knight from artistic torpor and psychological rumination. Shoaf draws an important parallel between the hunting of the hart and the dreamer as being the knight's confessor, so that hunting "the Knight's heart by maneuvering it farther and farther into, as it were, a corner of the wood until finally it has no avenue of escape", he must choose between "life in language, which would eventually issue in suicide, or life in the world, where renewed service and dedication would at least honor the memory of "good fair White".<sup>575</sup>

An implied opposition between language and suicide on one side and continued life on the other as mediated by the dreamer as 'confessor' is debatable, however. First, there is a clear gap of status between the two and also between poet and patron, which would be inverted by such a reading. Furthermore, the castle with "walles white" has hitherto been read as an iconographic memorialisation of White. It is a significant visual image, and is one already made possible by language. Raybin and Fein argue it is the knight's final achievement rendering White's beauty into words that allows him to overcome the finality of her death: she gains new life as an "enduring icon" through the poetic expression of her beauty.<sup>576</sup> This icon is one that will endure in the dreamer's recording of the dream in verse. If Scarry's point about beauty's replicative capacity is taken into account, it is language that is the means by which spiritual restoration is achieved. Raybin and Fein argue, in reference to *BD*, that

Beauty brings copies of itself into being. It makes us draw it, take photographs of it, or describe it to other people. Despite White's earthly death, the Beauty of her person shines in artistic revivification.<sup>577</sup>

The use of visual motifs and theories enables a positive redirecting of the will through language. The white castle exists as word as well as image. It is an externalisation and liberation of the images of

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<sup>575</sup> He continues: "That the Knight returns to his castle suggests that the impenitent heart, which had chosen seclusion in language and was therefore killing itself, is metaphorically slain by the confession, which works its transformation through this "death" into a penitent heart that can return to life. The one kind of "death" prevents a worse kind of death (suicide)." Shoaf, p. 321.

<sup>576</sup> David Raybin and Susanna Fein, 'Chaucer and Aesthetics', *The Chaucer Review*, 39/3 (2005), 225-233 (p. 227).

<sup>577</sup> *Ibid.*

White contained in the knight's heart and mind's eye. The utility of the visual motif also echoes the kind of architectural mnemonic described by Quintilian above. It is a visual icon that, through allegorical signification, represents White perhaps more fully than words alone and can function as an independent object of contemplation. Furthermore, as an externalised edifice, it makes the knight's personal image of White accessible to others. It is a product of his craft of love and his painting with the mind's eye—as well as a source of inspiration for the dreamer as poet. Raybin and Fein argue that *BD* “functions not only as a paean to White's beauty [...] but also, and primarily, as a poem, an aesthetic object offered up by its creator to the evaluation of those who encounter it.”<sup>578</sup> Though White's body cannot be returned to life, her memory will survive in the minds of many.

The narrator's dream reflects literary consciousness in a static *ekphrasis*, then brings it to life in the hunt scenes, and ultimately transposes the problem to a suitably detached memory and context via the discovery of the knight. The knight's story of White parallels the process so that his conversation with the dreamer ultimately forces him to verbalise the reality of her death. Her memory is finally transformed and externalised, and instead of remaining an image in his mind's eye becomes a castle with white walls for all to see. The process of recounting her appearance and personality gradually restructures her image from memory in the absence of her physical body. Ultimately, her image is freed from the confines of the knight's grieving, ruminating past memory of her. It may be thought liberated, refracted, transformed into the castle with its walls white, existing as a memorial icon both like and unlike White.<sup>579</sup>

The dream vision's simultaneous aesthetic and psychological foci may be understood in relation to an overarching interest in vision, both literal and metaphorical. Sensory experience, memory, imagination, and artistic practice are evoked in terms of clear and distorted sight as two non-

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<sup>578</sup> Raybin and Fein, p. 228.

<sup>579</sup> Perhaps recalling Grosseteste's *Le chateau d'amour*.

mutually exclusive categories encompassing the commonplace medieval types of vision: that which can be direct, reflected, and refracted. In medieval faculty psychology, memory, which stores sensory perceptions (of which, as explained previously, sight is superior), makes the recombinative capacity of imagination possible, whether for the purpose of writing a vision, like the narrator, or memorialising a loved one, like the man in black. *BD* reflects and refracts memories across several narrative frames and levels of consciousness, and across three fictional perspectives: Alcyone, the poet-dreamer, and the man in black. The boundary between real experience and mimesis is blurred as life, read stories, and imagined stories become indistinguishable in the storehouse of the mind, a process allegorised by a complex dream. The consolation of the Black Knight also suggests that art helps process memories into something akin to therapeutic healing, constructing a secure place, a tower that is not literally real but existing in the mind's eye of many.

*The House of Fame: Vision, Mutability, and Change*

*HF* establishes with apparent confidence the poetic and philosophical narratives that help shape relationships to and perceptions of the world around us. However, it also repeatedly pulls the rug from beneath its dream narrator's feet, inviting scrutiny of the relationship between 'seeing' and believing, one which includes visualisation of mental and bodily experiences. In portraying the different kinds of knowledge gained through the primary experience of seeing and the secondary experiences of reading and observing art, the instinctive authority attributed to certain kinds of discourse (namely that of the *auctores*), and not necessarily to dreams themselves or writing, is questioned. All become images within the beholder's inner view and subject to the transformations and disfigurements of personal judgment and interpersonal communication. The dreamer and the audience are shown, with disarming clarity, the instability, even chaos, beneath the veneer of what may be considered knowledge, ultimately forcing the dreamer to realise that unhindered knowledge is impossible in life and how meaning, if it is to be created at all, is dependent upon personal perspective. The narrator takes a metaphorical leap of faith committing his dream to verse, one that will in turn undergo similar machinations of Fame as befall all *tydynes* and the poetic works alike. Despite the unreliability of knowledge and communication, his art affords him the medium to convey this message, itself a universal truth, through the poem.

While *BD* may be read as including an argument for the utility of the creative arts that applies medieval theories of vision from theology and psychology to the context of human desire and understanding, in *HF* Chaucer's interest shifts from personal to interpersonal perception and communication. It is also a dream of the sublunary sphere. The experience does not afford the dreamer any deep personal insight, nor does it remotely thematise the pursuit of truth as a spiritual activity. Rather, Geoffrey hears the eagle's exposition of the natural world—its essence deeply philosophical but

focused on material causes and accidents rather than reinforcing the ultimate end of the liberal arts—and then implicitly looks to the mysterious man of authority for explanation.

In *HF*, which blends moments of levity with deeper anxiety about the limits of human perception and the instability of knowledge, the substantial hold that incorporeal phantasms and utterances have on reality is evoked in terms of their taking on physical substance and, to some extent, lives of their own through the manipulation of how an idea is expressed, perceived (literally as seen), and regenerated. Images of ideas in the mind which are brought into verbal being through visual (including via orthographic and plastic means) and oral communication are rendered yet more palpable by adopting visual form and colour that are conceptually and visually transformed by the goddess Fame. As discussed previously, phantasms, *avisiouns*, and figures, the mental substance of dreams, are re-imagined as corporeal things to play on the centrality of images in teaching and learning. This is initially suggested by the eagle's description of his discourse as a "demonstracion / In myn ymagynacion" (727-8), in which his words are so clear, or at least "lewed" (866), as to be practically corporeal: "palpable" to the point that they can be "shake[n] [...] be the biles" (868-9).

While the workings of Fame, and the literal afterlives of images and utterances are expressed in terms visible to the inner eye of the audience, so too are their movements: the amplification of sound as ripples in water (788-803); melting ice representing the transience of fame (1145); Lady Fame's changing size (1369-76) and the visual emanations from the trumpets of Laud and Sclaunder (1672-88, 1636-56), to name but a few. The relative uncontrollability of messages once they encounter the ever-moving and mutable forces of Fame underscores the poem's central question of the possibility of authority. Conceptual boundaries are transgressed: the delineation between things ordinarily seen or heard is blurred, as is the difference between living things, which have agency, and passive, inanimate objects, including the dreamer himself. Geoffrey is criticised by the eagle (654-569) for sitting "domb as any stoon", "fully dawsed" before his books, living the life of a "heremyte"

instead of taking “reste” and making “newe thynges”. Utterances, meanwhile, travel far and wide to reach Fame. They have agency and plead before the goddess. They are also chaotic, potentially spreading like wildfire (2076), as opposed to the orderly image of sound traveling through circular ripples (788-803). They physically tussle and pile upon one another to escape through the holes of the House of Rumour.

A recurrent theme in *HF* is the degree to which certain knowledge may be attained through thought (including mental phantasms) and experience (i.e., from sense impressions, as opposed to reading or viewing art), and their relative claims to authority. The mind’s ability to synthesise bodily and intellectual or aesthetic experiences alike into images that are subject to recollection, reason, and imagination had been a topic of interest since antiquity and, as Collette indicates, continued to generate serious concern in Chaucer’s lifetime in both popular culture and learned discourse, with the most extreme attitudes expressed in the total rejection of artistic and dramatic representations, as by the Lollards.<sup>580</sup> Long established philosophical models of vision and thought also added to preoccupations about the mind’s liability to misuse images.<sup>581</sup> Uncertainty pervades the central dream of *HF* and also colours the narrator’s conscious thoughts at the poem’s opening and after waking at its end. When musing upon the various types and origins of dreams and the difficulty of distinguishing between meaningful and misleading ones, Geoffrey divests himself of this task and hopes that God will ultimately turn them all “to goode” (1). Likewise, the dream’s recurring deferral of authority offers no simple solutions. But dreams, as described in the poem’s early lines, are variously true, and even those that are not transcendent—those that result from bodily disturbances or mundane waking thoughts—can generate personal and universal meanings.

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<sup>580</sup> See Collette, p. 12.

<sup>581</sup> See Collette, p. 13.

Experience and truth are introduced from the outset of the poem in relation to dreams. The opening of the first book reflects typical attitudes to the causes and potential value of dreams. The difficulty for the narrator is in knowing how to separate the useful ones from those arising from bodily causes. The vocabulary employed to touch on the subtleties between kinds of mental images seen during sleep introduces the idea of relative (and possibly subjective) values relating to how a dream is to be categorised. The terminology that Geoffrey uses about his dream shows that his own values of various visible phenomena are subjective:

God turne us every drem to goode!  
For hyt is wonder, be the roode,  
To my wyt, what causeth swevenes  
Eyther on morwes or on evenes,  
And why th'effect folweth of somme,  
And of somme hit shal never come;  
Why that is an avision  
And why this a revelacion,  
Why this a drem, what that a sweven,  
And noight to every man lyche even;  
Why this a fantome, why these oracles  
I not [...] (I.1-12)

In the *Confessio Amantis*, Gower also illustrates in detail the variability of truth contained in dreams for a poet, from Nebuchadnezzar's revelatory dream and Daniel's expert exegesis (*CA Prol.* 585-966), to what Davenport calls the "staged illusion[s]" sent to Alcyone (VIII.2647-56) and Nectanabus (VI.1789-2366).<sup>582</sup> Chaucer's narrator prays that Providence will find a way to tell between truth and falsity.<sup>583</sup>

The dream seems to grant Geoffrey a privileged glimpse of the semi-divine work of Fame in action, but even the validity and intent of the vision is debatable. The eagle claims he has been sent by Jove to reward the dutiful writer with "tydynges / Of Loves folk" (644-5) and some "disport and game" (664). We never hear any more of Jove. Furthermore, apart from Geoffrey's appeals to Christ

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<sup>582</sup> W. A. Davenport, 'Dreams in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*', *English Studies*, 91/4 (2010), 374-397 (p. 374). Davenport provides an extended analysis of the variety of dreams in the *Confessio*.

<sup>583</sup> Also cf. Chaucer's *Nun's Priest's tale* for a portrayal of the dilemma between form and parody partially expressed through Chauntecleer's musings on dreams.



and God, Christian allusions are mostly minor. A reference to John's Apocalypse serves to visualise the amount of eyes on Fame (1380-5). The poet appeals God to turn all dreams to good, but he also appeals to Apollo and even the Furies in his other invocations. Some have suggested that the man of authority at the end of the poem may be Christ, though many other literary, intellectual, and allegorical figures have been suggested without consensus.<sup>584</sup> We simply do not and perhaps intentionally cannot know if Geoffrey's dream is a divinely sent *oraculum* or a misleading *insomnium*. Its moments of nightmarish imagery suggest the latter, while benevolent guides such as the eagle and the nameless friend encountered in Fame's palace (1868-71) provide a degree of relief and implicit significance. This may be related to Augustine's discussion, at the beginning of *De videndo Deo*, of types of sight and their levels of authority.<sup>585</sup> Of the two paths to knowledge, seeing and believing, Augustine claims the latter is superior.<sup>586</sup> Although *HF* is decidedly secular in its concerns, it is still useful to apply this theory of belief and authority to the text.<sup>587</sup> It is also relevant, in a religious context, to sight and spiritual belief in reference to *Pearl*, as I will later argue.

In addition to expressing concerns about truth in terms of the phenomenology and ontology of sight, the plastic arts of engraving, sculpture, and painting are each used to explore how art—both visual and poetic—re-constructs and informs human experience. The earliest representation of any kind of objective truth in the dream occurs inside Venus' glass temple, where *ekphrasis* is the dominant motif. Here, Chaucer revisits a technique used in *BD* but reveals instead the fragility and instability of human epistemology and empiricism. The poem has a rich vocabulary of the plastic arts, including “ymages” (121) “tabernacles” (123), “portreytures” (125, 131), “figures” (126), “subtil compassinges

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<sup>584</sup> Koonce, pp. 266-68, suggests Christ. For a summary of theories as to the identity of the man of great authority, see ‘Explanatory Notes’ to *HF* 1. 2158.

<sup>585</sup> ‘To Paulina [The Book of the Vision of God]’ [epistle 147], in *Saint Augustine: Letters*, vol III, trans. Wilfrid Parsons (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1985), 170-224; ‘Epistola 147: *De videndo Deo*’ in *S. Aurelii Augustini Opera Omnia*, PL 33: S. Aurelii Augustini, t. secundus, pars prior, pp. 705-39 (Paris: Gaume Fratres, 1836). Discussed in Klassen, p. 8.

<sup>586</sup> Klassen, pp. 7-8.

<sup>587</sup> Klassen, p. 192.

[in] babewinnes and pynacles” (1188-9), the *ekphrasis* in Venus’ glass temple (120), and the sculptures of *auctores* in Fame’s hall (1357; 1419-1519).<sup>588</sup> These “finished artifacts”, as Kruger calls them, corporeally visualise stories.<sup>589</sup> Geoffrey’s retrospective reflection on the types of dreams and tongue-in-cheek incomprehension of their differences reveals how human contrivance lies behind attitudes toward what are all essentially modes of inner vision. Underlying this conceit is a more serious point about human belief and interpretation as the determinant of truth or falsity. Sight leads, seemingly, to truth early on in the dream. In Venus’ temple, Geoffrey diligently records the images and engravings on the wall, beginning no fewer than fourteen lines between ll. 199-475 with various permutations of the phrase “There saw I” (150) in recounting the stories from the *Aeneid* depicted on the temple walls.<sup>590</sup>

The *ekphrasis* bridges differences between pictorial and textual visualisations, presenting them as fluid experiences. One of the poem’s major conceits is the visual reimagining of human cognition in relation to reality and poetry. As Kolve writes, in this poem “[r]eading, seeing, hearing, and remembering are rendered as interchangeable.”<sup>591</sup> Geoffrey identifies the characters and scenes portrayed in the temple of Venus, and they are displayed with such marvellous skill that, at least for him, it is unclear whether the contents of the images are written, painted, cinematic, or even just imagined. Once sense impressions are absorbed into the mind they all become thought images, regardless of source. The description, if taken at face value, includes engraved words and paintings. The opening lines of Virgil’s epic are inscribed on a tablet of brass on a wall (141-48) while other areas are specified as images. The temple contains

[...] moo ymages  
Of gold, stondynge in sondry stages,  
And moo ryche tabernacles,

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<sup>588</sup> For a full list, see Steven F. Kruger, ‘Imagination and the Complex Movement of Chaucer’s *House of Fame*’, *The Chaucer Review*, 28/2 (1993), 117-134 (p. 118).

<sup>589</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>590</sup> Klassen, p. 192.

<sup>591</sup> Kolve, ‘Chaucer and the Visual Arts’, p. 305. This view is discussed in Buckmaster, p. 284.

And with perre moo pynacles,  
And moo curiouse portraytures,  
And quente maner of figures  
Of olde werk, then I saugh ever. (121-7)

The entirety of the *Aeneid* in word and image is a marvel only possible in the realm of the imagination. Critics have highlighted potential allusions to philosophical and rhetorical discourse in the dream's portrayal of, and movement between, visual imagery.<sup>592</sup> The action of seeing, however, takes precedence over reading. The poem will go on to exemplify each of the five senses, adding to the visual and auditory experiences the smell of the trumpets' emissions (see Laud and Sclaunder above), and the tactility of melting ice (1129) and perhaps even the taste of a city burnt by wildfire (2076). Importantly, however, these senses are all conceptualized and portrayed in accompanying visual terms. Additionally, the abstract faculties of thought, memory, and communication are expressed visually in the invocations (as opposed to the range of aural, visual, and mixed metaphors to describe communication).

The emphasis on the centrality of images in perception, understanding, and thought alludes to the Neoplatonic theory of vision as the pre-eminent sense. Gower's numerous allusions to the philosophy and theology of sight in the *Confessio Amantis* are evidence of the familiarity that some Middle English poets had with theories of vision and the prominence of these ideas during and after Chaucer. It is not unreasonable to suggest therefore that Chaucer may have been familiar with many of the same sources as Gower, by way of optical and contemplative ideas in poetic analogues, or more directly. Some of Gower's major references in Books 1, 4, and 7 of *CA* are clear allusions to Neoplatonist and Augustinian theories of vision: line 289 ("Between the lif and deth I herde") of Book

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<sup>592</sup> Various critics have read *HF* as engaging with the medieval architectural mnemonic trope. Rowland sees the temple, as well as the houses of Fame and Rumour, as memory houses that externalise artificial memory process, an idea potentially traceable to Bishop Bradwardine's treatise on memory. Beryl Rowland, 'Bishop Bradwardine, the Artificial Memory, and the *House of Fame*', in *Chaucer at Albany*, ed. Rossell Hope Robbins (New York, NY: Burt Franklin, 1975), 41-62. Buckmaster, p. 283 adds, "He is reproducing externally a version of the classical orator's internal journey from one memory picture to another."

I is preceded by a Latin epigram which describes “vision and hearing [as] fragile gateways of the mind” [“Visus et auditus fragilis sunt ostia mentis”] and gifts provided to the poet by Genius to express himself in sensible terms in spite of his lover’s malady (I.iv).<sup>593</sup> Shortly after, there is an extended passage in which Genius explains the power of the eye, reiterating the Platonic view of the eye as the organ “most principal of alle, / Thurgh whom that peril [i.e., love] mai befalle” (I.407-8). The love that begins in the eyes confuses thought, causing many men to “caste about here yhe / To loke if that thei myhte asprie / Ful ofte thing which hem ne toucheth, But only that here herte soucheth / In hindringe of an other wiht” (I.312-15).<sup>594</sup> Later, there is an allusion to Augustine’s theory of the eye as the organ of revelation and guide of reason (774-5).<sup>595</sup> On the subject of the philosophical theory of creation, Book VII reiterates the superiority of sight to hearing (VII.312-13). Most significant for our present purposes however, is Gower’s couching of the postlapsarian value of the arts in terms of visual theory. God has elevated man “[a]bove alle erthli creatures” (1507) through the gift of “speche” (1520) so that “[t]he hertes thoght which is withinne / Mai schewe, what it wolde mene” (1522-3). Chaucer’s narrator expresses a similar attitude toward the proper use of poetry, one which informs his anxiety about the possible misuse or misinterpretation of words.

Geffrey’s beginning prayer that God ‘turn all dreams to good’ emphasises the moral importance of art in articulating an inner vision, and Gower’s expression of the same idea appears to support this view. In the Invocation to Book III, Geffrey prays that Apollo, “God of science and of lyght” (1091) “Wilt helpe me to shewe now / That in myn hed ymarked ys” (1102-3). As we shall see, part of *HF* highlights the use and misuse of vision, making the desire for accurate representation and

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<sup>593</sup> John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, ed. Russell A. Peck, with Latin translations by Andrew Galloway (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2006).

<sup>594</sup> Compare Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, 2 vols, ed. B. van den Abeele, H. Meyer, M. W. Twomey, et al., (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005-7), I, 3.17 (Peck’s note to ll. 312-13 in John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004) III); Also see *Timaeus* 45b-47e on the pre-eminence of sight (note 6 to Book I in Peck’s 1980 edition, hereafter abbreviated to Peck 1980).

<sup>595</sup> See *CA*, Bk I, note 12 in Peck 1980.

hope of sensible interpretation central to the way the ‘invisible’—utterances, the laws of physics, and ultimately understanding—is visualised. As Davis argues, *HF* “destabilizes the notion of poetry as product—fixed, unified, closed—and offers instead a theory of poetry in motion.”<sup>596</sup> The temple of Venus section also shows the experience of poetry and of art in general operating as a process of constant movement, revision, and transformation. Davis concludes, “The poem asks us to reconceive form’s relationship to matter, and to think of poetic form not as an end point but as a conduit through which dynamic matter takes shape.”<sup>597</sup> The dream visualises the transformation of thoughts into images, which then become moving, living beings.

Geffrey’s readiness to accept everything he sees in the temple as truthful and unmediated is striking, as is his seeming hunger to see and know more.<sup>598</sup> He appears to equate beauty with “noblesse” and truth with “richesse”, i.e., detail or opulence:

When I had *seen* al this *syghte*  
 In this noble temple thus,  
 “A, Lord,” thoughte I, “that madest us,  
 Yet *sawgh* I never such noblesse  
 Of *ymages*, ne such richesse,  
 As I *sawgh* graven in this chirche;  
 But not wot I whoo did hem wirche,  
 Ne where I am, ne in what contree.  
 But now wol I goo out and *see*,  
 Ryght at the wicket, yf y kan  
*See* owhere any stiryng man  
 That may me telle where I am.” (468-479) (emphasis added)

Geffrey’s conflation of the visible and the certain results, to his dismay, in the realisation that the desert beyond the temple is devoid of any recognisable elements. His seduction by the temple’s images momentarily impairs his judgment: he is not equipped to tell what is apart from what is not. At the same time, however, this experiential and interpretive instability introduces the poem’s overarching

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<sup>596</sup> Rebecca Davis, ‘Fugitive Poetics in Chaucer’s *House of Fame*’, *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 37 (2015), 101-132 (p. 106).

<sup>597</sup> Davis, ‘Fugitive Poetics’, p. 105.

<sup>598</sup> Visual desire is a major theme of *Pearl*, as discussed in the following chapter.

concern. If the *ekphrasis* is imagined as a series of images with glosses, experiencing the temple's visual art as a narrative requires a continuous process of observation, memory, recall, and imagination.

The temple's wall paintings, which ambiguously mingle text with image, engage the dreamer's inner and outer senses. Klassen argues that this presentation of both types of meaning invites conceptual parallels between reading and mental visualisation as physical and internal activities: "Although the dream frames the dreamer's activity in the temple, the act of perception involved in the physical act of reading becomes interwoven with the physicality of dreaming as well as the strictly internal kinds of sight".<sup>599</sup> He also reads the proem's description of dreaming, "As yf folkys complexions / Make hem dreme of reflexions" (21-2), as an allusion to the physicality of the experience.<sup>600</sup> The temple's glass construction also suggests certain notions about the materiality of visual experience and the physiology of sight prevalent in the medieval period. It was adopted as a central motif in Lydgate's *Temple of Glass*, closely modelled in many respects on *HF*. In *HF* we are presented with other kinds of reflective surfaces of varying opacity and permanency: ice, rock, crystal, metal, and precious stones. Each of these has particular cultural and intellectual meanings attached to them, though glass, as we have already seen in *BD*, is worth examining in detail given the present focus on *ekphrasis* and corporeal and incorporeal vision. A structure of glass suggests that light will easily penetrate its walls, physically and symbolically illuminating its interior. The dreamer sees the temple's inside with physical but not necessarily mental clarity. It may be that the glass protects a certain kind of representation of reality, but it is also a fragile barrier between the external world and the art that offers a contrived version of reality. Things in the temple are so powerfully mimetic that they appear not only lifelike but alive.

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<sup>599</sup> Klassen, p. 192.

<sup>600</sup> *Ibid.*

Geffrey, however, progresses from these resplendent if ambiguous surroundings to an absence of all recognisable visual reference points. His equating of sight with truth, accuracy, and goodness is inverted as the desolate wasteland shatters the literary reality so dutifully constructed in the temple. Panic is induced by the sight of a world devoid of recognisable objects to lend context and meaning to his experience. When the veil of art is removed, a barren desert is revealed to be comparatively more real than the 'literary' temple. This may be part of why the discrepancy is so disturbing to Geffrey and perhaps also to an audience hypnotized by the poet's use of *enargeia*. The sight of the surrounding desert causes him to retract his earlier confidence in his vision and to appeal to Christ to save him "fro fantome and illusion" (493). Krieger extends the desert metaphor, describing the temple and its images in terms of the positive and negative types of vision encountered in such locales: the *ekphrasis* is "a miracle and a mirage" insofar as the narrative sequence of the stories "seems frozen into an instant's vision", but it is simultaneously the descriptive text that enables "the illusion of such an impossible picture."<sup>601</sup> This distinction touches on the duality of stories, represented in the text by words and images, as stimulating the imagination to produce visions both marvellous and potentially misleading. Although art has the power to make things appear before one's very eyes, even material things that are independent of appearances are to some extent impermanent. The temple stands upon the sand that surrounds it (486), and sands shift. Furthermore, when he beholds the House of Fame from the outside, Geffrey tries to identify the material of its foundation, "lyk alum de glas / But that [...] shoon ful more clere" (1124-5) and he soon recognises it as "A roche of yse, and not of stel" (1130); "a feble fundament / To bilden on a place hye" (1131-2). The ice engraved with the names of famous individuals "almost ofthowed" (1143) yet shining reflects and increases the fragility of glass to which it is compared, and in hindsight, the material of the temple. The later comparison with rumour growing like a spark into the wildfire that engulfs an entire city (2076) conveys a similar sense of the

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<sup>601</sup> Krieger, pp. xvi-xvii.

increasing verbal impermanency and volatile revisionism afforded by visual and graphical representations of metaphors.

Geffrey's reaction upon leaving the temple betrays his human reliance on using recognisable images to contextualise himself, literally and spiritually. Visual verbs recur frequently but their connection to listed images such as town, house, tree or bush, grass, and arid land evokes the dreamer's worry of *not* being able to see such things. He is alone and quite nowhere:

When I out at the dores cam,  
I faste aboute me *beheld*.  
Then *sangh* I but a large feld,  
As fer as that I myghte *see*,  
Withouten toun, or hous, or tree,  
Or bush, or grass, or eryd lond;  
For al the feld nas but of sond  
As smal as a man may *se* yet lye  
In the desert of Lybye.  
Ne no maner creature  
That ys yformed be Nature  
Ne *sangh* I, me to rede or wisse. (480-491)

It is tempting to interpret the apparent absence of life and phenomena as a reversal of the *locus amoenus* motif, or even of the Garden of Eden. The feeling of unnaturalness perhaps suggests, retrospectively, the artificiality of the temple as a metaphor for all the stories and images of love that populate Geffrey's cultural consciousness. He even attempts to ascribe some kind of nominalist control over his surroundings by comparing them with the Libyan desert, which merely puts a name to nothingness, unless one perhaps adopts Davis's view of the desert as a specific allusion to the Libyan coast where the shipwrecked Aeneas arrived (223) before Venus directed him to Carthage: "a conduit between two legs of a journey", making Geffrey a "second Aeneas" embarking on his own search for authority.<sup>602</sup>

In any case, the characters' presentation in the temple *ekphrasis* indicates the importance of perspective and interpretation in informing the perception of reality where paradoxical truths appear to be present. Geffrey is content to believe the exculpatory view presented in one version of the story:

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<sup>602</sup> Davis, 'Fugitive Poetics', p. 114.



he stresses Aeneas' deceit and calls him a traitor several times, but also interrupts the story "to excuse Eneas / Fullyche of al his trespass" because, as the book states, Mercury had bid him "sauns fayle" to leave Dido in Africa (427-9). Elsewhere he defers to other textual authorities and how "the booke tellis" things "in certeyne" (426): his recommendation that the reader consult Virgil's *Eneydos* and Ovid's *Epistles* for details of Dido's suicide note effectively silences and marginalises her (378-9). There is more of the viewer's judgment of the *ekphrasis* in these lines than, for example, in the dream bedchamber in *BD*. As Buckmaster argues, it is "a memorial reconstruction of a highly individualized act of reading and conflating two books, the *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Heroides*, vii."<sup>603</sup> These two "irreconcilable" narratives are bridged by the "composite character of Aeneas," who is both "Virgil's epic hero *and* Ovid's false lover, admirable *and* treacherous [...] an appropriate visual summary of the value of fame which is inherently ambiguous."<sup>604</sup> She concludes, "from his memory of two old books, the dreamer has created a 'new thing,' an eccentric retelling that recognizes the validity of conflicting truths in fiction—'fals and soth compounded."<sup>605</sup> It is not until *LGW* that Chaucer's poet persona will accept a divine rebuke for not having presented women more sympathetically and is forced to reconsider his own limited perspective and the multiple potential sides to all stories (though this too may be ironic). In *HF*, communication and meaning are portrayed as in a constant conceptual and visual flux, and therefore, perhaps ironically, in a single perpetual state.

It is from the virtual blank slate of the desert that Geoffrey embarks on the experience, if not of being a lover, then of perceiving love's tidings, which will inspire him to write from a reinvigorated and more personally meaningful perspective. Later in the *HF* he learns the significance of personal perspective: Gabrovsky suggests an allusion to the tenet expressed by Macrobius that "each individual,

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<sup>603</sup> Buckmaster, p. 284, note 16.

<sup>604</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>605</sup> *Ibid.*

as he looks about him, has his own horizon.”<sup>606</sup> Chaucer’s narrator writes, “I wot myself best how y stonde” (1878). Gabrovsky argues that “like Macrobius, the narrator *defines* the motion from the vantage point of his own center”; Geoffrey’s self-certainty is established by “an awareness of his own structures of experience”; and the repetition of first-person pronouns “supports the idea that empirical observation ultimately depends on the shifting *individual* perceptions of a first-person point of view.”<sup>607</sup> Following this assessment of the tale’s presentation of sight as the arbiter of selfhood, artistic production is spurred on by clashes between the individual and the external world. It should also be noted that total solipsism is not compatible with the idea of a divinely ordered cosmos. To some extent, the temple, like the dream chamber of *BD*, imbues the dreamer’s relationship with the works of the *auctores*, but instead of proceeding to another kind of literary perspective as does the *BD*-dreamer, Geoffrey’s transition from vision into nothingness enacts a more dramatic break from the key of “remembraunce” entailed by absence of “olde bokes” (*LGWP* F, G 25-6).<sup>608</sup> It is to more books that Geoffrey turns for security, but it is also from them that the dreamer of the *LGWP* turns away to admire daisies in real life (*LGWP* F, G 30-44). The latter poem begins with the narrator’s admission that he has heard a thousand times of heaven’s joys and hell’s suffering, and confirmation “I acorde wel that it ys so”, though he is aware this means a reliance on faith rather than experience, at least in this world: “Ne may of hit noon other weyes witen / But as he hath herd seyde or founde it writen; / For by assay ther may no man it preve” (*LGWP* F, G 7-9). At the same time, it is implied one should be cautious about hearsay, even from apparent sources of authority:

God forbede but men shulde leve  
 Wel more thing then men han seen with ye!  
 Men shal not wenen every thing a lye  
 But yf himself yt seeth or elles dooth;           [G-prologue: “For that he say it nat of yore ago”.]  
 For, God wot, thing is never the lasse sooth,  
 Thogh every wight ne may it nat ysee.

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<sup>606</sup> Gabrovsky, p. 61. Cf. Macrobius, *Commentary*, I.xv.15 (Stahl, p. 151). Stahl also cites related views proposed by others, including the inability for humans to view the entire earth from afar (Cal. 66).

<sup>607</sup> Gabrovsky, p. 61.

<sup>608</sup> Where the F and G prologues are only slightly divergent I have quoted F.

Bernard the monk<sup>609</sup> ne saugh nat all, pardee! (10-16)<sup>610</sup>

One may interpret Geoffrey's exit from the temple to the desert in *HF* as enacting a comparable absence of authoritative seeing and saying, perhaps towards offering a possibility of new, firsthand observations and creativity. Kruger sees the divestment of earthly "appearance" as creating "a void that must be filled with images."<sup>611</sup> Such images may be inspired by the statues of the *auctores*, but even the pillars upon which they stand are of varying permanence.<sup>612</sup> Each person ultimately constructs meaning according to their own personal perspective, and it too will be subject to the sands of time.

For the *HF*-dreamer, the necessity of trusting in one's inner senses to articulate and inform perception provides another step toward confidence in his shaping and recording experience into poetic and personal truth within a philosophical and psychological conceptualisation of remembering and recording. Regarding the non-linear temporality of medieval ideas of memory, Evans makes the important point that such a view "overrides the spatiotemporal organisation of the written text and of reading itself."<sup>613</sup> The invocations thus seemingly exist apart from the central narrative's timespan, adding a new kind of perspective on time as at once past, present, and future within a text. Belief, which is paramount in how one is to make sense of and articulate such an experience, also centres upon an inward, perhaps timeless, gaze. This can be linked to philosophical and mystical models of vision. With respect to contemplative and mystical literature, Buckmaster sees a particular affinity with the poem's tripartite structure, the soul's meditational powers, and the three virtues of Prudence.<sup>614</sup>

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<sup>609</sup> A footnote in the *Riverside* reads: "probably Bernard of Clairvaux".

<sup>610</sup> The gist of this passage is the same in the F and G texts, though there may be some ambiguity as to whether the G-text's replacement of "seen with ye", "seeth", and "saugh" with "seyn with ye", "say", and "say" is a mere difference in spelling or a more substantial association between seeing and saying.

<sup>611</sup> Kruger, 'Imagination and Complex Movement', p. 123.

<sup>612</sup> Josephus stands upon a pillar of iron and lead (1431); Statius, Homer, Dares, Titus, Lollius, Guido delle Colonne, and Geoffrey of Monmouth all on iron (1457-1470); and then iron for Virgil (1482); copper for Ovid (1487); iron for Lucan (1498); and sulphur for Claudian (1508).

<sup>613</sup> Ruth Evans, 'Chaucer in Cyberspace: Medieval Technologies of Memory and *The House of Fame*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 23 (2001), 43-69 (p. 45).

<sup>614</sup> See Buckmaster, pp. 279-81: the books of *HF* respectively pertain to "memory and the past"; "intelligence and the present", and "foresight and the future".

Whether one reads these as strictly governing the structure of the text, the themes all appear within the poem. Memory has its own correspondences with past, present, and future time, in recall, experience, and imagination, respectively, and it is the poet's task to recreate this experience.

*Rays of Light Reveal Ripples in Water: Observing Motion and Generation*

In the next two books of *HF*, the abstract philosophical principles the poet ascribes as underlying reality are expressed in simple, consistent, logical terms and aided by visual representation, both imaginary, such as picturing sound moving like ripples through water (796-803), and real, such as the humanoid black and red utterances that travel to Rumour and Fame (1078). When Geoffrey is abducted by the eagle, his mental virtues are “astonyed and asweved” (549). He clearly struggles to come to terms with the situation in which he finds himself, for although the eagle forces him to his senses by shouting, he must also understand that the journey “Is for thy lore and for thy prow” (579). He needs to overcome his sense of bewilderment, to open his corporeal and mental eyes. The eagle comically teases him (“Lat see! Darst thou yet loke now?” (580)) before assuaging all doubt by identifying himself as “thy friend” (582).<sup>615</sup> This familiarity, also suggested in the dreamer's semi-recognition of the eagle's voice which causes his mind to come to him again (560-4), results in the dreamer lowering his guard: “And therwith I / Gan for to wonderen in my mynde” (582-3). Abstract and complex ideas are portrayed in material and visual terms, including the eagle's couching of the use of rhetoric in images of literal solidity and weight: “For hard langage and hard matere / Is encombrous for to here” (861-2). This also mirrors Geoffrey's intention as poet to make his thoughts and their potential virtue visible

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<sup>615</sup> This may be a joke at the dreamer's expense in response to the medieval view of the eagle's ability to gaze at the sun and its practice of throwing hatchlings that cannot unmovingly view the sun out of the nest. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, XII.vii.10-11. Parts of this appear in antique sources: see Lucan, *The Civil War (Pharsalia)*, trans. J. D. Duff (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), IX.902-6.

to his audience by way of the ear. Note too the emphasis on sight in the proem to Book II: “now at erste shul ye here / So sely an avisyon” (512-13) and the following address to Thought’s ability to open the treasury of the mind and to let men “*se* / Yf any virtue in the be / To tellen al my dream aryght” (525-7).

Despite the narrator’s use of the visual to display reliable laws of physics, as the eagle attempts to do, and the desire to enlist the powers of the mind to externalise remembered images, the dream vision repeatedly establishes a sense of certainty only to reveal the chaotic reality that paradoxically works in tandem with such functions.<sup>616</sup> Geoffrey’s dream experience reveals to him that knowledge is always subject to distortion because it is mediated, echoed, and relayed like ripples in water. Only in heaven can one see face-to-face, as opposed to through a glass darkly. The dream guide, however, is an eagle, a bird famed in bestiaries for its acute eyesight and ability to gaze directly into the sun as well as the symbol of John the Evangelist.<sup>617</sup> The entrance and portrayal of the eagle is also derivative of Dante’s account in *Purgatorio* 9 of the golden-plumed eagle that sweeps him up to the sphere of fire and to the outskirts of Purgatory. Its entrance comes as a response to Geoffrey’s desperate upward gaze and is imagined as a second golden sun (503-7), emanating literal and metaphorical illumination. The dreamer’s journey with the Eagle shows how illusions, phantasms, and other things seen with the mind’s eye, and even those which hinder clarity (such as the dominant metaphor of Fame’s distortion of tidings), are the inevitable means by which we experience and make sense of the world. The Eagle by contrast explains phenomena such as sound in terms that are familiar and visually conceivable to the dreamer.

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<sup>616</sup> A parallel may be drawn to the common medieval comparison of sublunary Fortune to divine Providence, of which Fortune is ultimately a subject.

<sup>617</sup> See Revelation 8:13 in addition to many other images of eagles swooping down to earth from heaven to give messages to mankind; as a symbol of renewed youth (Psalm 103:5, Isaiah 40:31). For more on the specific symbolism of the eagle in *HF* in relation to Virgil, Ovid, Dante, Boethius, and Pseudo-Dionysius, see Minnis, *The Shorter Poems*, pp. 201-3.

The description of the Eagle's flight and conversation with the dreamer in the whole of Book II displays Chaucer's interest in a variety of intellectual sources, particularly contemporary natural philosophy and associated works.<sup>618</sup> His most direct allusions are to Augustine, Dante, and Boethius, though there are more implicit and indirect references as well.<sup>619</sup> The Eagle's logical proof, his "worthy demonstracion", comes from his "ymagynacion" (727-8). Lynch notes that "in medieval faculty psychology the imagination was likely to offer a phantasm as the basis for a logical proof."<sup>620</sup> The eagle employs a series of images to explain the causes of certain phenomena in simple terms that can be imagined. The bird quotes Aristotle's theory that "Soun ys nocht but eyr ybroken" (765) and then draws a conceptual parallel between the physical causes of two elemental reactions: "For as flaumbe ys but lyghted smoke, / Ryght soo soun ys air ybroke" (769-70).<sup>621</sup> The doctrine of natural inclination is also imagined visually and spatially. Everything is drawn to its natural resting place, and Fame's house, between heaven, earth, and sea, is the place where spoken words are naturally inclined to go. Their movement is likened to ripples in water which increase until they are stopped by some physical object. The law of motion and the image of ripples was widely accepted by this time, and it ultimately derives from passages in Aristotle's *On the Soul* (419b1-421a7) and *Timaeus* 67.<sup>622</sup>

The visualisation and materialisation of words functions on a similar imaginative principle. At first it is playful, but it soon becomes chaotic. Geoffrey's reluctance to observe directly the laws of nature and matter may appear a kind of shield against lived experience. Although the eagle offers the kind of authority that Geoffrey seeks, providing an opportunity to observe the operations of the higher

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<sup>618</sup> For a recent assessment of Chaucer's use of contemporary philosophy, see Cartlidge, 'Ripples'. Also see Joseph E. Grennen, 'Science and Poetry in Chaucer's *House of Fame*', *Annuaire Medievale*, 8 (1967), 38-45 (p. 44).

<sup>619</sup> For further detail, see Davis, 'Fugitive Poetics', p. 108.

<sup>620</sup> Footnote to HF, l. 727 in *Chaucer's Dream Poetry*, ed. Lynch.

<sup>621</sup> See 'Explanatory Notes' to HF, ll. 765-81: Boethius, *De musica* 1.3 is one likely source of this image.

<sup>622</sup> The *Riverside* notes that this illustration (ll. 788-821) also occurs in Boethius, *De musica* 1.14 among other sources proposed by critics are listed. Cartlidge, p. 63, cites Aristotle and Plato as ultimate sources of this idea, although Calcidius' translation of the *Timaeus* ends at 59c). He argues that whether or not Chaucer had direct knowledge of the contemporary natural philosophy of Grosseteste, Burley, or the like, he could have come across their ideas via Holcot, who would have had direct access to such works.

spheres firsthand, Geoffrey's response may be read as perfunctory or expected. He chooses not to learn the locations of the stars lest viewing their brightness "should shenden al my syghte" (1014) and would rather contemplate secondary descriptions of heaven, in Boethius, Martianus, and Alan's *Anticlaudianus* (972-990). A potential allusion to the serious theological image of spiritual illumination as dazzling and blinding to the human eye is reduced to ironic mockery of the dreamer's (literal and figural) short-sightedness and cowardice regarding the revealed nature of the topics he diligently studies. Geoffrey's preference for books echoes the propensity for Chaucer's dreamers to turn to artistically mediated rather than lived experiences: love poets who are not themselves lovers. Perhaps Geoffrey sees himself emulating the greatest intellects and partaking in a Boethian flight, high upon the wings of philosophy, only to be brought down to face his own inability to take advantage of his present opportunity. His delusions of grandeur are undercut by the Eagle, who commands, "Lat be [...] thy fantasye!" (992). (And they literally are fantasies of the dreamer's mind inspired by literary accounts.) The dreamer's refusal to glimpse these things firsthand may, to some extent, be considered absurd. On the other hand, stellification happens after death—his reaction may be one of fear, of dying and of apprehending directly that which may be harmful to the human senses and mind.

Having established the basic rule of movement governing matter (which ultimately extends back to the Primary Cause), the eagle takes Geoffrey through the heavenly spheres to show him cosmic law in action. A secondary issue introduced at this point is perspectival change and the relationship of the individual to the cosmos. The eagle invites his passenger to identify any landmarks he can from their altitude. Geoffrey observes:

That al the world, as to myn yë,  
No more semed than a prikke;  
Or ells was the air so thikke  
That y ne might not discerne. (906-09)

This reinforces the Eagle's rhetorical point that no human has ever reached such an altitude; not even the renowned traveller, Alexander the Great, nor other noteworthy flyers such as Scipio, Daedalus,

and Icarus (913-924). While such a perspective should be enlightening (as it was for the wise Alexander, Scipio, and also Troilus, who is here unmentioned and perhaps even unwelcome in such company), the allusions to Daedalus' and Icarus' melting wings and later Phaeton's inability to control the sun god's chariot (935vv.) betray the dangers associated with misusing the power of flight. Geoffrey's reflection on his ascent has virtually the opposite effect to that found at the end of *Tr.* (V.1807-27). Everything is so far away that it becomes indistinguishable, like the "litel spot of erthe" seen by Troilus (V.1815) and his metamorphosed perspective, signalled by his laugh in the face of "wo" (V.1821), but the potential for a deeper resonance merely leads Geoffrey into a complaint about the thickness of the air. He also becomes doubtful, "wexen in a were" (979), and cannot tell whether he is present in body or spirit "For more clere entedement / Nas me never yit ysent" (983-4). This assessment may be applied to his general reluctance to see things clearly as well as his wish to accept things held on authority.

Geoffrey also sees the generation of earthly phenomena, "th'engendrynge in hir kindes", in the heavens (968). At this point, the poet's imagination begins to create corporeal rather than intellectual phantasms. As mentioned earlier, speech is personified and bears the "lyknesse" of its speaker (1076-82). This may be viewed as a deconstruction of the cognitive process. On an experiential level, communication can be observed and recalled in the image of a person speaking, or as manuscript text, encribed in black or rubricated for emphasis in red or black. Mental images of such things can be combined, resulting in an imagined concept such as a red or black speaker. But imagining invisible speech as red or black is more challenging. It is helpful therefore to read the poem's imagery in terms of faculty psychology. As discussed earlier, memories may be considered as a combination of image and affective content, or *intentio*. Augustine's use of the term *species* to analyse human perception is also bipartite: corporeal objects all generate a *species*, or incorporeal likeness in the physical and spiritual senses:



[A]ll knowledge according to the form [*secundum speciem*] [of what is known] is similar to that which it knows. [...] And as, when we learn of bodies through our bodily sense, some likeness of them arises in our mind, and is a phantasm of the memory (for the bodies themselves are by no means in our mind when we think of them, but only their likenesses).<sup>623</sup>

The idea of speech resembling its speaker is a poetic and highly imaginative rendering of the concept of sense impressions (such as hearing a voice) retaining some of the residual *thingness* of the speaker. With respect to Augustine's theory, speech may be interpreted as a sensible object that generates an incorporeal likeness, a *species* that has a mental and sensory presence. The visual resemblance of tidings to their original speakers perhaps parallels the individual "will" that goes into any act of speech as well as any recollection. When things are spoken, they are in fact cognitive processes being brought into being.

The idea of speech as corporeal provides a foundation for the remainder of the tale, which imaginatively portrays utterances as human beings striving for fame. Their independence from their vocal origins makes them liable to change: they can be repeated, reinterpreted, amplified, silenced, or distorted in other ways. These personified *species* are literally mediated through the decisions and operations of the personified Fame and, representing her absence, Rumour. But before discussing the rest of the poem, it is worth considering some potential conclusions that can be drawn about the poetic intermingling of the visual and verbal, the corporeal and the incorporeal. Krieger makes a significant point about the challenging relationship between the visual and poetic arts. Sight, he notes, tends to entail "a kind of 'visual epistemology'":

the poetics [of imitative representation] is built out of the spatial and visual language of the pictorial art, though, as applied to the *verbal* arts, that language can be no more than roughly and uncritically metaphorical in its attempt to force those verbal arts to take on alien (i.e., spatial and visual) characteristics, if only by analogy.<sup>624</sup>

One may be able to read *HF* as such an analogical attempt—an experiment in testing the limits of poetry in its potential to create and shape one's visual and mental experience of the text. As Geoffrey,

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<sup>623</sup> Collette, p. 16. Augustine, *On the Trinity*, IX.11.16. See Collette, p. 16 on the centrality of the concept of *species*, in medieval thought.

<sup>624</sup> Krieger, p. 13.

now alone and bereft of the Eagle's stabilising power, ventures closer to Fame and into her castle, objects of sight become increasingly distorted, dynamic, and mutable.

*Of Fame and Rumour: Picturing the Obfuscation of Knowledge with Alarming Alarity*

The progression of Geoffrey's travels through the realm of Fame reverses the trajectory of spoken word. They pass through the whirring wicket of the House of Rumour—that house of Daedalus, the “*Domus Dedaly, / That Laboryntus cleped ys*”<sup>625</sup> (1920-1)—before entering Fame's castle, where their subsequent transformation and fate will be decided.<sup>626</sup> Geoffrey observes the chaotic movements of utterances trying to escape the House of Rumour to reach Fame. A truth and a falsehood struggle to exit from the same hole, resulting in “*fals and sooth compounded*” (2108). He thus belatedly learns of the potentially doubled unreliability of speech once it has passed through Rumour and Fame. The repeated descriptions of distortion and mixing suggest it is near impossible to ascertain the original quality of uttered words.

A passage from *DPN* provides a significant comparison for the discrepancy here between pure and impure things, one which includes objects as well as words. *Veritas* is born of the union between *Icon* and *Hyle*. *Hyle* receives the mirror of forms when *Idea* kisses her “through the mediating agency of the interpretative *Icon*” [*eam Iconiae interpretis interventu vicario osculata*] (18.10). Wetherbee links this to the Neoplatonic doctrine of secondary form, an “intermediary between eternal ideas and their substantial embodiments.”<sup>627</sup> *Genius* assumes the role of the intermediary, transmitting divine wisdom

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<sup>625</sup> Compare *RR*: “Nature was a better smith than Daedalus ever was” (*RR* 21367-71; Horgan 329).

<sup>626</sup> As Gabrovsky, p. 52, indicates, the appearance of utterances in Rumour before they reach Fame contradicts the eagle's explanation of natural motion. I can only explain this as either an oversight or deliberate obfuscation on Chaucer's part.

<sup>627</sup> See Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry*, p. 206.

to the sphere of Nature.<sup>628</sup> This explanation of a divinely mediated creation unites Christian and Neoplatonic ideas of the pure, the good, and the truthful. Deities have the power to endow chaotic matter, *hyle*, with a coherent form and thus a stable nature.

*HF*, meanwhile, reflects thinking regarding the generative capacity of humans and the chaos of disordered forms both in transit and in the process of coming into being. There is a kind of organizing principle inherent in the separate houses of Fame and Rumour as well as the spaces reserved for different recipients of Fame's favour: the names etched in the house of Fame's ice foundation (1134vv); the entertainers adorning the beryl exterior of the castle (1259vv); the coats of arms on the interior walls (1342vv); the columns holding up the poets and their respective metal materials (1419vv). These iconic representations (or artifacts) are variously transient, suggesting the inconsistency of creation informed by Fame's ordering principle. One side of the ice foundation melts in the sunlight while the other is temporarily preserved. The statues of the poets have different durabilities, including iron, tin-plated iron, copper, and sulphur. The entire castle is made of beryl (1184-5) and we are told these walls "shone ful lighter than a glas" and may have the magnifying power associated with the gem, as it "made wel more than hit was / To semen every thing, ywis, / As kynde thyng of Fames is" (1288-92).<sup>629</sup> The overall effect of this orderly disorder (or disordered order) may be read as an inventive perversion or parody of Christian and Platonic accounts of creation.

The existence of Fame is perhaps the most permanent feature. Although her appearance is perpetually changing (she is small and then large, perhaps alluding to her variable influence), she must always have a place in the world, as is supported by what must be a perpetual carving and melting of names in the castle's foundation (1135-46). The carbuncle dais upon which she is "perpetually ystalled"

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<sup>628</sup> Ibid. Wetherbee, p. 207, also writes that "Genius is the word of man."

<sup>629</sup> See French and Anglo-Norman versions of Marbode's lapidary in Paul Studer and Joan Evans, *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* (Paris: Édouard Champion, 1924); See Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, 16.20 (Trevisa 2:837) for beryl's ability to make love grow.

(1429-64) evokes her durability, centrality, and mediating role. The carbuncle seems to invert the holy one in the Park of Life described in *RR*. Jean de Meun's carbuncle counteracted the dangerous effects of the crystals in the Spring of Narcissus by self-generating, actualizing, and refracting divine illumination throughout the Park. Fame operates on a more debased, refractive principle that is emphatically distorting and entirely capricious, suggested through the image of her sitting atop a carbuncle "dees" (1360-3) which may be associated or juxtaposed with her illusory appearance. She seems magnified at one moment; shrunken at the next (1368-76) and she is covered in eyes (1380-2), ears, and tongues (1389-80), evoking the illusions and distortions created by imperfect actualizing media. Geoffrey observes her power to change the appearance and qualities of tidings in action (1520-1867). When tidings approach Fame as supplicants, the unpredictable human acts of interpretation and communication are allegorically examined. As Geoffrey's observations of Fame's groups of supplicants show, utterances are almost always distorted according to her whim, while the decisions are executed by Eulos with the two trumpets, "Clere Laude" and "Sklaundre" (1571-82). Tidings are metaphorically and visually refracted through the horns' emissions: they are made sweet by Laude (1673-88) or smoky and putrid by Sklaundre (1625-56). Tidings are rarely reproduced with any accuracy, apart from one instance in which Fame grants her supplicants' wish to let their works be unknown (1689-1701).

*HF* shows the repeated distortion of corporeal and incorporeal forms through the effects of and desire for fame. Chaucer reconstructs theories of medieval faculty psychology and philosophy and the primacy of imagery in *HF*. The line between potential and actual being (which encompasses the acts of remembering, communicating, and interpreting) is explored and challenged, as are the capacities of poetry, in the poem. Chaucer makes abstract ideas visible to the mind's eye (and corporeally, in the dream) by mediating them through the visible *species* of figurative language. He then follows this by showing the more chaotic side of such mediation in the Houses of Rumour and Fame.

The poem breaks off, probably unfinished, with one final suspension of direct, unadulterated enlightenment. Following the image of true and false tidings merging to escape the House of Rumour, Geoffrey “beholde[s]” a frenzied rush of personified utterances to a particular area (2144). He hears cries of “What thing is that?” and “I not never what” emerge from the throng (2147-8) as they pile up upon one another, “And up the nose and yën kaste” to see what is happening (2152). The last few lines describe what Geoffrey sees:

Atte laste y saugh a man,  
Which that y [nevene] nat ne kan;  
But he semed for to be  
A man of gret auctorite . . . (2155-58)

He glimpses the apparent likeness of an authority but there is no way to confirm or dispel Geoffrey’s association of the mysterious individual with it. He also does not hear the man speak. The dream ends with the final image of what seems a new *species*: a kind of magnet for tidings, perhaps even a reactive force against the distortions of Rumour and Fame. However, there is no final clarification or resolution, and this matches what seems to be *HF*’s general nature and *sentence* throughout.

*Illumination and Multiplication of Species in Pearl*

Chaucer's dream poems, *BD* and *HF*, are both representative of and innovative in their employment of visual themes, motifs, and related intellectual material in literary, philosophical, and theological writing. *Pearl* shares many of the features relating to the idea of vision presented in these two dream visions: mainly the prominent theme of grief and the use of images in coming to terms with it, and the boundary between the corporeal and incorporeal, and thought and reality, so playfully presented in *HF*. While there are other dream visions worthy of extended analysis along these lines—Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and Chaucer's *LGW*—*Pearl* fully engages with the transformation of a human dreamer's understanding of a higher reality in response to a divine vision. It is also useful to consider *Pearl*'s treatment of bodily and spiritual vision alongside the theory of optical *species*, which explains, as *Pearl* does, the Golden Chain's hierarchy—of the divine, ideal, and immaterial on one end and the physical and mortal on the other—in terms of the divine luminescence that links the highest and lowest beings through faith.

The four poems attributed to the *Pearl*-poet survive in a single manuscript, Cotton Nero A.x, generally dated to the late-fourteenth century.<sup>630</sup> *Pearl* has much in common with Chaucerian works, including shared analogues, from *RR* and the *Comedy*, to more specific resonances with French and English lyric and *Piers Plowman*.<sup>631</sup> Its elegiac and consolatory mode recalls Boethius' *Consolation* and *BD*, and is linked more strongly with the latter for its illustration of emotional healing as learning to see differently. In this respect, however, *Pearl* more closely resembles mystical and visionary literature, although the narrator is no more mystical, contemplative, or self-aware than the average person. The limitations of his personal perspective and emotional subjectivity bar him from having the clear and discerning eye, and thus claim to truth, possessed by visionaries. As Scanlon argues, the narrator does

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<sup>630</sup> Andrew and Waldron, 'Introduction' to *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript*, 5<sup>th</sup> edn, p. 1.

<sup>631</sup> Sarah Stanbury, 'Introduction' to *Pearl*, ed. Stanbury (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001).

not claim “narrative privilege or prophecy”, which makes the vision resemble poetic accounts of the divine such as the *Comedy* more than contemplative ones.<sup>632</sup> The dreamer’s fundamental failure of sight and understanding, however, sets *Pearl* apart from Dante’s vision and brings the poem’s trajectory closer to *HF*.

The intermingling of secular and sacred in *Pearl* complements a more important examination of the relationship between the physical and spiritual in terms of the vacillations in meaning made possible by poetic language and imagery. These, in turn, educate the dreamer. The metaphor of the pearl is of course central to and representative of the poet’s approach. Watts links the image to two of the most influential analogues of medieval dream poetry, as well as the poet’s dual material and devotional symbolism: he famously likens the poem to a string of pearls: an “endless round [...] inviting through its circularity endless and ever deepening meditation.”<sup>633</sup>

The wealth of critical responses to *Pearl* has produced a rare consensus about the poem’s prominent visuality, and specifically how “the poem directs most of its considerable visual energies to exploring vision at its epistemological limits.”<sup>634</sup> Its concerns are also more directly theological. Throughout the dreamer’s vision, we are presented with a continual and challenging duality of meaning in everything he sees and hears. His difficulty and at times inability to distinguish the material from transcendental alerts us not to his obtuseness, but to the challenges of limited perception and understanding, and the human mind’s reliance upon sensations and images. The dreamer learns, by poignantly being cast out of the dream, that he cannot join his beloved Pearl-maiden in this life and the value of seeing through a glass darkly.

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<sup>632</sup> Larry Scanlon, ‘*Ekphrasis*, Trope of the Real’; or, What the *Pearl*-dreamer Saw’, in *The Art of Vision: Ekphrasis in Medieval Literature and Culture*, ed. Andrew James Johnston, Ethan Knapp, and Margitta Rouse (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University, 2015), 243-268 (p. 264).

<sup>633</sup> ‘Introduction’ to *Pearl: A Modernised Version of the Middle English Poem* by Victor Watts with an introduction by Kathleen Raine and original text glossed and edited by David Fuller and Corinne Saunders (London: Enitharmon, 2005).

<sup>634</sup> Scanlon, ‘*Ekphrasis*, Trope of the Real’, p. 258.

Because of the acute self-awareness of the limits of mortal perception that pervades the poem, the poet draws upon familiar images and symbols to articulate the divine. The dreamer's vision of the New Jerusalem surpasses John's account in Revelation, creating for Bernau a "fusion of marvel and memory", while Barbetti views Pearl's building upon the iconoclasm of Revelation in medieval literature and art as "introducing new ways to think about salvation and the order of creation."<sup>635</sup> The poet uses *enargeia* and *ekphrasis* to clarify and employ these images through paradox, enigma, and *integumenta*. One of its central motifs is transformation: of visual perception, meaning, and ultimately spiritual knowledge. It reveals a more dramatic maturation of its dreamer than *BD* or *HF*. Visual metaphors, such as the pearl, the river, and the elaborate ekphrases of the dream landscape can be read on multiple levels: they are both analogical and anagogical, less conventionally figurative and more transcendently meaningful than, for example, *HF*'s personifications and material manifestations of Fame and Rumour. The transformations of meaning in *Pearl*, exemplified in the use of concatenation and repetition, are similar to the "heart/hart" motif and the ivory tower in *BD*. The "twin valences" of bodily and spiritual vision, as Stanbury argues, dramatise through the dreamer's perspective and metonymic transposition of physical and divine existence, the "aporia between experience and other ways of knowing".<sup>636</sup> Following on from this reading, the use of complex visual symbolism in *Pearl* responds to John 1:14: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." The mortal realm depends on the bodily senses and that which can be sensed by the body in order to transpose the meaning of the visible, natural world, with the abstract and eternal. Because the vision focuses on the divine, which resists figurative representation, poetic "radical transformation and discontinuity" embodies the words of Revelation 21:5, "Behold, I make all things new."<sup>637</sup>

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<sup>635</sup> Anke Bernau, 'Feeling Thinking: Pearl's Ekphrastic Imagination', in *The Art of Vision*, 100-123 (p. 121); Barbetti, p. 53.

<sup>636</sup> See Sarah Stanbury, *Seeing the Gawain-Poet: Description and the Act of Perception* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), pp. 13-14; Stanbury, 'The Body and the City in Pearl', *Representations*, (s.v.)/48 (1994), 30-47, (p. 38).

<sup>637</sup> See J. Allan Mitchell, 'Pearl: Figuring the Unfigurable', *The Chaucer Review*, 35/1 (2000), 86-109 (p. 92).



Although art is a human contrivance, it is from the dreamer's perspective that the heavenly realm is constructed. We rely on his art to envision an otherwise unfigurable higher reality that is the work of God, the ultimate craftsman. In this sense, *Pearl* presents personal experience as an elaborate *ekphrasis*. It is God's craft, seen indirectly via the dreamer's words, that is paradoxically part of a higher level of reality that can only be witnessed by mortals as a mediated art form. According to Barbeti, "the somatic dream gives us a mental landscape in which anything is possible," while "the literary dream vision [...] sets itself up as art, as visual description, and thus as a piece of reality that shuns the apodictic and reminds all readers/viewers that not all reality makes easy sense."<sup>638</sup> The "cleft in category" that runs through *Pearl* described by Barbeti extends the role of visual representation from mere representation, into the intermediary between human reality and the Otherworld.<sup>639</sup> The dreamer's mortal, material reality is surpassed by the transcendent reality of the New Jerusalem, and through the poem, the audience's imagination engages this higher level of reality.

It is useful to consider *Pearl*'s process of transformation and transposition in relation to the medieval theories of optical *species* and multiplication of *species*. The poem's sustained use of light in concordance with the effects of divine vision and wisdom on the dreamer seems to indicate an interest in the theology of light, which during the time of composition had been integrated into Grosseteste's theory of the multiplication of *species*. As the previous chapters have shown, the treatment of illumination in Neoplatonist allegory strongly influenced the symbolism of vision and light in the later dream vision tradition. They also applied optical *species* to metaphors of illumination: Boethius viewed light beams as the necessary transmitters of optical *species* (*Bo* 5.m4.6-20).<sup>640</sup> The etymological link between *species* and knowledge underpinned theoretical treatments of the topic. *Species*, from "spec", is

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<sup>638</sup> Barbeti, p. 49.

<sup>639</sup> Barbeti, p. 50. She builds upon Retallack's view that art is "experience itself" and "a vital player and occupier of space-time, rather than a solely mimetic endeavor." Joan Retallack, *The Poetical Wager* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), p. 15. (Cited by Barbeti, p. 56.)

<sup>640</sup> See Akbari, p. 191.

a translation of the Greek term “eidos”, derived from “eido” (“to see”) and the perfect form “oida” (“to know”): Smith explains “both terms literally denote ‘what a thing looks like,’ yet both underlie terms denoting intellectual acts.”<sup>641</sup> After Grosseteste, Bacon considered a range of terms, including *lumen, idolum, phantasma, simulacrum, forma, intentio, similitudo, umbra, virtus, impressio, and passio*, which all “denote the effect of an agent” and are applied terms for *species*: this demonstrates the dual application of *species* as intelligible *visibilia* and mental images.<sup>642</sup>

Grosseteste’s theory of light as a corporeal substance hybridised philosophical and theological metaphysics.<sup>643</sup> His model of divine light radiating in all directions from spirit into corporeity is a philosophical reformulation of fundamental Neoplatonist ideas: “[T]he form [*species*] and perfection of all bodies is light; but of the superior bodies rather spiritual and simple, of the inferior bodies [...] corporeal and multiplied.”<sup>644</sup> His conception of light facilitates the relationship between the spiritual and material worlds and adds a philosophical dimension to the theological concept of divine illumination.<sup>645</sup> There are mystical resonances as well: Grosseteste translated and commented on the works of Pseudo-Dionysius, and his theory of divine light is reminiscent of the pseudo-Dionysian model of Christ as the light which multiplies and issues forth into the world under sacred veils.<sup>646</sup> The theory of multiplication of *species*, as distinct from visual *species*, was introduced by Grosseteste sometime in the early-mid thirteenth century and provided a natural philosophical explanation for

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<sup>641</sup> A. Mark Smith, ‘Getting the Big Picture in Perspectivist Optics’, *Isis*, 72/4 (1981), 568-589, (p. 574, note 24).

<sup>642</sup> Lindberg, *Theories of Vision*, p. 114. Cf. Roger Bacon, *Tractatus de multiplicatione specierum*, LLLT-B (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), Pars prima, Cap. I, vol. 2, pg. 407, ln. 6: “Et haec virtus secunda habet multa nomina; vocatur enim similitudo agentis, et imago, et species, et idolum, et simulacrum, et phantasma, et forma, et intentio, et passio, et impressio, et umbra philosophorum, apud auctores de aspectibus.” Also see Akbari, p. 24.

<sup>643</sup> Lindberg, *Theories of Vision*, p. 97. As Lindberg explains, his theory was inspired by Plotinus’ idea of *nous*. On the centrality of Grosseteste’s views and especially his theory of light in medieval thought, see Akbari, p. 36; Lindberg, *Theories of Vision*, p. 95.

<sup>644</sup> Robert Grosseteste, *De luce*, trans. Lock, p. 31; Latin text pp. 56-7. See also Grosseteste, *Hexaëmeron*, ed. Richard C. Dales and Servus Gieben (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), part 2, ch. 10 (pp. 97-100); Grosseteste, *On the Six Days of Creation*, trans. C. F. J. Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 97-100. See Akbari, p. 36.

<sup>645</sup> This contrasts with Aristotle’s theory of being: see Gabrovsky, p. 6.

<sup>646</sup> See James McEvoy, *The Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), pp. 19-123 and 351-68. (Cited by Akbari, p. 36); Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry*, p. 57.

earlier Neoplatonic and theological models of the hierarchy of being, expressed through the Golden Chain or the *axis mundi*.<sup>647</sup> Multiplication of *species* explains the transformation of light from its divine to material embodiment, and in a mundane sense, the process by which objects of sight are relayed to the eye, as a serial rather than continuous change. The theory as presented by Grosseteste was central to thirteenth-century models of vision until Ockham rejected it in the first half of the fourteenth century.<sup>648</sup> The multiplication of *species* and the theory of refraction, also covered by Grosseteste, are conceptually significant in with respect to the necessity of intermediaries.<sup>649</sup> The Pearl, both as a maiden and a symbolic gem, is an intermediary between the dreamer and God, echoing the role of mediaries in Christian discourse.<sup>650</sup> Furthermore, the reading of the dreamer's path to enlightenment as a chain of pearls leading to truth parallels the multiplication of *species* model.<sup>651</sup>

Whether or not the *Pearl*-poet knew Grosseteste's writings, the idea of optical *species* allows conceptual parallels to be drawn between optical theory and the dream's theme of transformation in relation to sight, art, and spirituality. The following analysis of *Pearl* thus concerns vision in terms of the effects of the visible and the poetic upon the dreamer's spiritual progression, or how the divine *species*, made visible by intermediaries such as the *Pearl*-maiden, poetic concatenation, and *ekphrasis*, reflects and modifies the dreamer's perception. The pre-*somnium* section of *Pearl* establishes the lost child's worth in earthly, material terms that will be transfigured into spiritual value in the dream. Value is expressed primarily in terms relating to mercantile exchange: descriptions of "Perle plesaunte [...] oute of oryent" (I.1; 3), "clanly clos in golde so clere" (I.2) and distinguished as special among all

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<sup>647</sup> Michell, p. 97. For a parallel between the dreamer's different observations of the New Jerusalem and the heavenly procession, and the difference between recognizing and experiencing presented by Walter Hilton, see John Finlayson, 'Pearl: Landscape and Vision', *Studies in Philology*, 71/3 (1974), 314-343 (p. 337).

<sup>648</sup> Lindberg, *Theories of Vision*, p. 141.

<sup>649</sup> This extends back to Aristotle's theory of the actualising medium in *On the Soul* 418b1-419b2.

<sup>650</sup> On Aquinas' description of Mary as intermediary, see Lagerholm, pp. 84-6. On Aquinas' theories of being, see Marenbon, pp. 117-122.

<sup>651</sup> Heather Maning, "Never the Less": Gift-Exchange and the Medieval Dream-Vision *Pearl*, *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, 38/2 (2005), 1-15 (p. 10).

“gemmez gaye” by being set “sengeley in synglure” (I.7-8), articulate personal value in terms of monetary worth, rarity, and above all, aesthetic perfection. The dreamer’s desire is also evoked in the conventional imagery of the courtly feminine beloved, as he claims “Ne proued I neuer her precios pere” (I.4) and modifies her perfect roundness and delicate size as “reken [...] araye” and “smoþe [...] sydez” (I.5-6).<sup>652</sup> Strong feelings of human love are thus interwoven with notions of human value. The terms “prynces paye” and the Orient (I.1; 3) also have Christian connotations which will be transformed into other symbols as the poem progresses.<sup>653</sup>

At this point, the significance and worth of pearl are thus confined by the narrator’s mortal perspective. Feminine and neuter pronouns present the pearl as both object and person: “her” and “hyr” (as in ll. 6, 8, 9), according to Andrew and Waldron, foreshadow its identification with the maiden, while the others (ll. 10, 13) evoke the “symbol-object”.<sup>654</sup> The stanzas of the first fitt each return to the central quality of “pryuy perle withouten spot” (I.12), with the additional equation of private, individual value with preciousness by I.36, which substitutes “pryuy” for “precios”.<sup>655</sup> These early lines also repeatedly refer to the pearl’s superiority in aesthetic and metaphorical terms, which may be read as resistant to the narrator’s impulse to enclose it.<sup>656</sup> His earthly enclosure has already proven inadequate as the body is housed in the natural coffin of earth (I.22, V.259), while the soul, as we later learn, has entered the City of God. In this sense, the image of enclosure evokes the jeweler’s benevolent desire to showcase the pearl’s singular beauty, though paradoxically by thinking he is

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<sup>652</sup> See, for example, the Black Knight’s description of White in *BD*. (Andrew and Waldron in their edition of *Pearl* refer to Chaucer, *Tr.*, III.1248 and Gower, *CA*, IV.1146-7.) Borroff, in *The Gawain Poet: Complete Works*, ed. and trans. by Marie Borroff (London: Norton, 2011), p. 119, notes that “the conventional language of secular love poetry in medieval times was also used in a considerable body of religious poetry addressed to the Virgin Mary.”

<sup>653</sup> *Pearl*, I.1-2 (footnote).

<sup>654</sup> See footnote to *Pearl*, 3-4.

<sup>655</sup> The images of the opening lines have many other allegorical resonances too numerous to list here, though what should be noted is that the heightened spiritual, courtly, and abstract dimension of value spring from simple visual observation.

<sup>656</sup> Boethius’ use of imprisonment as a metaphor for material attachment in the *Consolation* comes to mind. See Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry*, p. 78.

containing and privately viewing it. In reality, neither the coffin of soil nor the eternal city are suitable for a living human soul, so the images convey the barrier between the living and the dead even as the jeweler attempts to craft a housing for the pearl, suggesting his love, though genuine, is as yet incomplete or inadequate. The poem's enclosures progress from the mutable to immutable, from coffin, to garden, to heaven.<sup>657</sup>

In the next two stanzas, the narrator's subjective love of the pearl is evoked through further sensory impressions. The association of sight and pleasure, as well as obscured sight and longing, is prevalent: "Syþen in þat spote hit fro me sprange, / Ofte haf I wayted, wyshande þat wele / Þat wont watz whyle deuoyde my wrange / And heuen my happe and al my hele" (I.13-16). Watts translates "wayted" to "watched"<sup>658</sup> and Andrew and Waldron gloss "þat" (I.17) as referring to "keeping watch". His longing and watching result in intense emotional and physiological damage (I.17-18), much like that experienced by the grieving dreamer and knight in *BD*.<sup>659</sup> In the next stanza the qualities of stillness and silence as an absence of music and his sadness of thinking of the pearl with "hir color so clad in clot!" (I.22) give way to decay and paleness in the context of spice, flower, and fruit-bearing plants. Darkness prevents the sun from fulfilling its nutritive effect, and in turn, the plants from seeding: "Þat spot of spysez mot nedez sprede, / Þer such rychez to rot is runne" (I.25-6). Borroff reads "spysez" as a pun on spice and *species*, the latter referring to "visible shape, appearance, or semblance," and applying to the maiden.<sup>660</sup> The poet's wordplay on "spyce/spece" as spice-bearing plant as well as a creature or being appears multiple times in the text (I.25, 35; II.104; IV.235; XVI.938). The metaphorical usage of the term suggests an interest in the notion of *species* as something that is both sensory (as a spice) and capable of regeneration (as a seedling) but also in terms of the *Pearl*-

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<sup>657</sup> Borroff, 'Introduction', p. 121.

<sup>658</sup> *Pearl*, trans. Watts, I.14.

<sup>659</sup> The emotional effect of vision also prevents music from healing him (I.19-20).

<sup>660</sup> Borroff, 'Introduction', p. 160. She also cites passages I.5.10-12, XVI (3.1), IV (5.7).

maiden's divine rebirth and dissemination of wisdom. Indeed, the term "mirror" never appears in the poem, although reflection is clearly a significant theme.<sup>661</sup> The *species* of the pearl's aesthetic perfection and radiance are thus aligned with the power of the *species* of music and sunlight.<sup>662</sup> The colours of the rotting blooms, "blayke", "blewe", and "rede", are paradoxically described as shining brightly against the sun (I.27-8). Things pertaining to the bodily domain—song and colour—are potentially healing and regenerative. "Of goud vche goude is ay bygonne" (I.33) pertains not only to the local context of plants and seeds but also, perhaps, to the relaying of goodness as a multiplication of *species*.

The growth of meaning by the transmutation of symbolic imagery in *Pearl* is analogous to its transformation of scenery. These two tropes are also used in *BD*, though the landscapes encourage new ways of seeing through different narrative modes. *Pearl* uses different spaces to represent the levels of existence and meaning which modify the dreamer's understanding. The emotional and physical significance of the poem's three landscapes, the earthly "erbere" (I.9), the *locus amoenus*, and the New Jerusalem, are generated and perceived by the narrator's senses, representing the state of his understanding.<sup>663</sup> As Finlayson argues, the vision of Jerusalem presents landscape as "more than a place—it is a state of being and a complete mode of perception and communication."<sup>664</sup> The imagery in the beginning of the poem appears to be a product of the narrator's imaginative recollection.<sup>665</sup> Alternatively, the dream world may be viewed as a representation of a higher, invisible reality made accessible to the dreamer through the symbols of his dream, and attuned to his personal concerns

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<sup>661</sup> Bloomfield, p. 165.

<sup>662</sup> Here I refer to *species* as a general affective process.

<sup>663</sup> Finlayson, p. 316.

<sup>664</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>665</sup> V. A. Kolve, *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1984), p. 22. This definition is derived from the threefold cellular model of the human brain in *De proprietatibus rerum*.

with the presence of the maiden. In either case, the dreamer's own will is instrumental in rationalising what he sees or imagines, and giving it personal emotional relevance.<sup>666</sup>

If read from this perspective, the narrator's series of emotionally charged images are personal and subjective, but the *Pearl*-maiden's exegesis of his dream experience shows she is a necessary visual intermediary that helps actualise, by making visible to his soul, the spiritual illumination underpinning the *visibilia* of the dream. Although the narrator is present in the dream as a "spyryt" sprung from its body and the mortal realm (II.61), he is not a spirit like the heavenly beings he encounters. He is still alive, and as such, bound and beholden to his mortal body and reliant upon sense perception, visual aids to understanding, and as demonstrated in his unruly desire to see ever more of the joys of heaven, the weaknesses of the senses. The visual details of the *locus amoenus* suggest the influence of conventional courtly presentations of beauty, including the indescribability topos, as well as apophatic theology: the "glemande glory" of the crystal cliffs is ineffable and exceeds the beauty of the most skillfully executed "webbez", or tapestries:

I ne wyste in þis worlde quere þat hit wace,  
Bot I knew me keste þer klyfez cleven.  
Towarde a foreste I bere þe face,  
Where ryche rokkez wer to dyscreuen.  
þe lyzt of hem myzt no mon leuen,  
þe glemande glory þat of hem glent,  
For wern neuer webbez þatgez weuen                    [tapestries, glossed by Andrew and Waldon]  
Of half so dere adubbenente. (II.65-72)

His heart and mind are repeatedly overwhelmed by the visual, aural, olfactory, and tactile richness of his surroundings in the dream garden, but the brightness of the scenery (its visual *species*) and his sight of it (through use of his own *species*) enable him to gain something from the experience, if not complete enlightenment. The link-word "adubbenente" conveys the beauty, abundance, and intricacy of the dream landscape, and it is also the "adubbenente" that causes his ghost to forget his grief (II.85-6),

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<sup>666</sup> Bundy indicates the inability of the imaginative faculty to give meaning to things and the necessity of the will. Murry Wright Bundy, *The Theory of Imagination in Classical and Mediaeval Thought* (Folcroft, PA: Folcroft Library Editions, 1976), p. 189. Discussed in Kolve, *Chaucer and Imagery*, p. 23.

filling him with joy (III.121-4). It is overlapped with the concatenation of “more and more” (as in III.146, below), which conveys his entrancement, the bounty of the scenery, and the effect the vision has on kindling his desire to uncover more beauty. The poem’s concatenation and patterns of repetition as having a somatic effect like enchantment, which works on the dreamer and the reader, and leads from grief to joy.<sup>667</sup>

“Adubbenente” and “more and more” also emphasise the earthly quality of the dreamer’s desire, even if its object is spiritual. In spite of the dream vision convention of entering new and unusual landscapes, it is highly unusual to describe the spirit as leaving the body.<sup>668</sup> He builds on Wilson’s view that this detail may be an attempt on the poet’s part to bring his poem into line with Augustine’s idea of the “spiritual vision”, “in which spiritual forces affect the imagination as if they were sensory images,” though I believe he correctly points out that *Pearl* does not easily fit into this classification.<sup>669</sup> However, the dreamer, while physically “free from his flesh”<sup>670</sup> in the dream, is still bound to earthly modes of perception and understanding. He cannot support the bliss intended for heavenly spirits: “vrþely herte myȝt not suffyse” (III.135). Incompatibilities and inconsistencies in human perception emerge. The dreamer’s bodily desire to see “more and more”, out of a love of beauty and joy rather than a spiritual thirst, is what leads him through the dream:

Forþy I þoȝt þat paradise  
Watz þer ouer gayn þo bonkez brade;  
I hoped þe water were a deuysse  
Bytwene myrþez by merez made;  
Byȝonde þe broke, by slente oþer slade,  
I hoped þat mote merked wore.  
Bot þe water watz depe, I dorst not wade,  
And euer me longed ay more and more. (III.137-146)

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<sup>667</sup> See Barbetti, p. 47.

<sup>668</sup> Finlayson, pp. 321-2.

<sup>669</sup> Finlayson, “*Pearl*: Landscape and Vision”, p. 322.

<sup>670</sup> Edward Wilson, “The ‘Ghostly Drem’ in *Pearl*”, *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 69 (1968), 90-101; discussed in Finlayson, p. 322.



His visual and emotional hunger is akin to bodily appetite, suggested by his navigation and conceptualization of the landscape and its banks as physical, traversable spaces. His desire may be contrasted with the pure, indivisible, and everlasting nature of divine joy.

Nevertheless, the dreamer begins to spiritually progress as a result of his new vision. The chain of mirrors, “[b]ytwene myrþez by merez made”, leads him to see increasingly marvellous beauty. The prevailing mood is one of wonder: when he beholds the Lamb he has “much meruayle in mynde” (XIX.1130), and earlier on, his “goste” had been described as “gon in Godez grace, / In auenture þer meruaylez meuen” (II.63-4). His heavenly surroundings—the garden, the river, the maiden, and the City—are an elaborate *ekphrasis* of inset jewels. The dreamer’s words convey the subjectivity and corporeality of his vision and its meaning. The birdsong heard by the dreamer is also evoked in terms of its superiority to instrumental music (II.85-6) and he describes the scenery in the following passage as an artistic artefact, with “crystal klyffez so cler of kynde” and trees with trunks “as blew as ble of Ynde” and leaves of “bornyst syluer”, a gleaming vision culminating in the riverbed covered in “precious perlez of oryente / Þe sunne bemez bot blo and blynde / In respecte of þat adubbement” (II.73-82). The pearl gravel which crunches beneath the dreamer’s feet is described negatively, being bright enough to make the sun’s beams appear dim. Altogether this “addubement” is a scene of immense, unearthly radiance, and even though the imagery is expressed as marvellous in terms relating to earthly exoticism, there is an underlying sense of journeying, the dreamer’s soul a metaphorical merchant in search of new materials and experiences. The dreamer’s sense of awe also suggests that he is aware that such marvels surpass anything known or made by humankind, though his focus on craftsmanship and physical appearance suggests he has not yet uncovered the symbols’ transcendent meaning. His reaction is of pure wonder, which may be taken as a signal of the human mind’s inability to assimilate the experience—which would cease to be marvellous if completely understood.<sup>671</sup>

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<sup>671</sup> Bernau, p. 121.

The dreamer's wonder is revealed as a prerequisite and symptom of seeing divine *species*. Another way to conceive of it may be as the inability for the human mind to be cognizant of exactly how *species* are transformed from divine into material knowledge, or even an inability to absorb all *species*. Human vision and language falter in response to the divine. The “maskelez perle” (XIII.745) transcends sublunary modes of creation and understanding:

Quo formed þe þy fayre fygure?  
 Þat wroȝt þy wede he watz ful wys;  
 Þy beauté com neuer of nature—  
 Pymalyon paynted neuer þy vys,  
 Ne Arystotel nawþer by hys lettrure  
 Of carped þe kynde þese propertéz;  
 Þy colour passez þe flour-de-lys,  
 Þyn angel-hauyng so clene cortez (XIII.747-756)

The poet responds here to literary and philosophical traditions by alluding to Pygmalion and Aristotle, as well as the longstanding distinction also contained in such works between *kynde* and society, perhaps suggested by the heraldic symbolism of the fleur-de-lys. The fallacy of human vision and understanding is evoked alongside light imagery, through the visual description of the glittering, glassy gems at the bottom of the river, which shine like stars while men sleep (II.109). The image of stars becoming visible by virtue of the sky's (and the human mind's) darkness inverts the dark rot that eclipsed the sun's rays earlier in the poem. The image signals a widening of the dreamer's perspective, now turned to the superlunary. This darkness suggests the potential for illumination but also the limitations of human sight. Mortal eyes are closed when the heavens are most visible. As Bloomfield argues, the dreamer sees through a glass darkly, “[l]ike Paul—but without his consciousness”, for he only gains partial knowledge of the maiden and the vision.<sup>672</sup> The resistance of the divine to the apex of human reason and art recalls the Pseudo-Dionysian ascent of the soul into the darkness of unknowing.<sup>673</sup>

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<sup>672</sup> Bloomfield, p. 165.

<sup>673</sup> Lagerholm, pp. 137-8.

Mystical experience and contemplation are meant to progress from darkness to enlightenment, though the dreamer is barred from basking in the full light of God. The City and its inhabitants generate light from within (XVIII.1045-6), though he glimpses them by the light of the moon (XIX.1093). This suggests that as a mortal, he will only be allowed to apprehend the divine through its actualization as a veiled symbol—the procession of Pearl-maidens in the city—rather than partaking of the light directly from its source. His sight of the bleeding wound in the Lamb’s side inspires partial recognition and a potentially obtuse response: “Alas, þo3gt I, who did þat spyt?” (XIX.1138), and wonder, but not rational reflection upon the “delyt” that “non lyste to wene” and the pain that “[i]n His semblaunt watz neuer sene” (XIX.1141, 1143).

The dreamer’s emphasis on the external appearance of things leads to some, although minimal, transposition in much of the poem. His desire to see “more and more” may be viewed as a natural human spiritual inclination in response to his proximity to heaven, though his lack of understanding perhaps more strongly suggests the danger of *curiositas*, or misdirected vision. According to Wetherbee, “[c]uriositas is curbed by posing an alternative structured vision accessible through intuition of a reality underlying the *visibilia* of nature.”<sup>674</sup> A proper understanding of the dream’s images should lead to enlightenment, but the dreamer’s emotional response overwhelms his mental faculties, repeatedly resulting in a perverted will that renders him incapable of clearly understanding what he sees, and thus preventing transposition. His reaction is one of amazement, but as Bernau indicates, pure wonder brings the dreamer “closer to the brink of annihilation [...] “[e]kphrasis is as close as one can get without crossing the border between life and death.”<sup>675</sup>

The limits of mortal vision and comprehension are expressed through the blinding intensity of light. Things sparkle and shine but they also dazzle, stun, and threaten to melt the mind. When he

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<sup>674</sup> Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry*, p. 15.

<sup>675</sup> Bernau, pp. 121-2.

first sees the maiden, he faintly recognizes her. The light does not appear to blind him. He also appears to identify her without relying upon external appearance. She is, after all, “A mayden of menske, ful debonere” (III.162) and not the two-year-old girl he had known in life. The longer he gazes upon her the more he seems to know her, which suggests more than purely corporeal vision and the enlightening effect of her visual *species*:

Blysnande whyt watz hyr bleaunt;  
I knew hyr wel, I had sen hyr ere.  
As glysande golde þat man con schere,  
So schon þat schene anvnder schore.  
On lenghe I loked to hyr þere;  
Þe lenger, I knew hyr more and more. (III.163-8)

The concatenation of “more and more” does not, in this passage, refer to an unfulfilled appetite or sensual plenty. Her light, which derives from God (XVIII.1045-6), appears to grow and multiply, like the *species* of Grosseteste’s metaphysical model of light, to illuminate the dreamer’s soul. The next stanza elaborates on the effect this transcendent vision has. It is not mere delight but “glory”:

The more I frayste hyr fayre face,  
Her figure fyn quen I had fonte,  
Such gladande glory con to me glace  
As lyttel byfore þerto watz wonte. (III.169-80)

The poet then shifts to a courtly register reminiscent of *RR*, and glory may be read as juxtaposed with his more human instincts in the verb “enchace” (glossed by Andrew and Waldron as “desire”), and the corrective “baysment” that gives his “hert a brunt” (III.173-4). The rest of the stanza blends both levels of experience:

I seȝ hyr in so strange a place—  
Such a burre myȝt make myn herte blunt.  
Þenne verrez ho vp her fayre front,  
Hyr vysayge whyt as playn yuore:  
Þat stonge myn hert ful stray atount  
And euer þe lenger, þe more and more. (III.175-80)

Her appearance is uncanny: she is removed from her earthly surroundings and devoid of the physical body she had in life and seen as spiritually transformed and in her new divine home, for the dreamer “so strange a place”. Her bright visage suggests beauty and perfection, and because it stings the

dreamer's heart, his subconscious recognition of her by his soul rather than his eye. It is difficult, if not unhelpful, to attempt to separate the corporeal and spiritual effects of the dreamer's vision. Both contribute to his learning, although there is always the potential for *curiositas*, and the dreamer's bodily and spiritual senses struggle with heavenly *species*.

One of the lessons the dreamer learns is the impossibility of quantifying divine beauty. Like the Trinity, perfect in its tripartite balance and indivisibility, the *Pearl*-maidens in the City of God each generate light as if self-sufficiently and partake in God's infinite well of light. Furthermore, their radiance, symbolic of divine grace, is everlasting and infinite, yet there are a "hundred and forty powsande" (XIV.786) of them. Although this is a finite amount, it has numerological significance that transposes the earthly idea of many into an intimation of perfection, circularity, and infinity. With respect to optics, the proliferation of pearls can be interpreted as multiplication of *species*, with the light of each gem further issuing infinite light *species*. The maidens' luminosity symbolises divine grace. To borrow an optical analogy from Dante (*Paradiso* 2.94-105), the distance between a mirror and a burning candle may affect the size of the reflected candle, but will not diminish the brightness of the flame: they are equally bright ["*igualmente risplenda*"] (*Par.* 2.105).<sup>676</sup> For Akbari, this optical experiment proves a point with "enormous" potential implications: "while the visible species degenerates as a result of its multiplication through the diaphanous, light is invulnerable."<sup>677</sup>

Other instances of overwhelming *species* and complex materiality are the description of the pearl on the maiden's breast, the value and apprehension of which threatens to "malte" the human mind (IV.224). Melting conveys the intensity of divine *species* and the mind as a divinely crafted artefact.<sup>678</sup> The *Pearl*-maiden mediates divine wisdom for the dreamer through parable. She also

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<sup>676</sup> The passage is discussed in detail in Akbari, *Seeing through the Veil*, p. 139.

<sup>677</sup> Akbari, p. 140. Also see p. 144 on Dante's use of Christ and Beatrice as universal and personal mediators between man and God, respectively; p. 156 on Virgil as Dante's light in *Inferno* 6.29.

<sup>678</sup> Bernau, p. 112. The riverbank is also associated with metaphorical burning: "As fyldor fyn her bonkes brent" (II.106). A potential play on words may also be read into the "brunt" [blow] to the dreamer's heart during his first sight of the maiden, III.174. On the dangerous heat of divine light in *Paradiso* 25.118-21, see Akbari, p. 167.

instructs him to follow the river of light (which may be read as an image of rhetorical *ductus*<sup>679</sup>) and begins, seemingly, to view the heavenly city according to John’s words in Revelation, and so through John’s eyes. Even so, the dreamer’s vision is not complete (only “þe rȝtwys man schal se Hys face” (XII.675)) or direct. He still sees the kingdom in its actualized form, and his words are guided by John’s—they are “[a]s John þe apostel hit syȝ with syȝt” (XVII.985). After the maiden tells him to follow the river for further enlightenment—to see the “mote [...] vnhyde” (XVII.973), John’s visionary voice assumes the maiden’s role as intermediary, guiding the dreamer’s vision as John “deuys hit” (XVII.978-84). One may view this as indicative of some spiritual maturation. Earlier, the gems of the river had been described alongside the image of stars glimmering while men sleep, and luminosity seemed to be prized for its aesthetic beauty:

The dubbement of þo derworth depe  
 Wern bonkez bene of beryl bryȝt.  
 [...]
 For vche a pobbel in pole þer pyȝt  
 Watz emerald, saffer, oþer gemme gente,  
 Þat alle þe loȝe lemed of lyȝt,  
 So dere watz hit adubbement. (II.109-10; 117-20)

The stream, with its beryl banks and jeweled bottom, is essentially an ekphrastic artifact, physically and metaphorically separating the living and the dead. The river-barrier may also be read as “a metaphorical signal of the line between representation and reality that resists being crossed”, as Barbeti does.<sup>680</sup> Crossing the barrier entails a more direct encounter with that which lies within, as with equivalent ekphrastic enclosures in *RR* and *PF*, and is depicted on the outside.<sup>681</sup> The river also parallels the wall around the New Jerusalem, with its twelve gates of “rych platez” and “margyrye, / A parfyt perle þat neuer fatez” (XVIII.1035-8), and which only allow spotless souls entry: “þer entrez

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<sup>679</sup> This recalls the image of wading through deep water associated with *ductus*. See Carruthers, “The Concept of *Ductus*, or Journeying Through a Work of Art”, in *Rhetoric Beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Carruthers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 190-213 (pp. 190-2).

<sup>680</sup> Barbeti, p. 51.

<sup>681</sup> Compare, for example, the wall surrounding the Garden of *Deduit* in *RR* and the gates through which the dreamer of *PF* is shoved.

non to take reset / þat berez any spot anvnder mone” (XVIII.1067-8). With respect to the river, the dreamer observes, “þe water watz depe, I dorst not wade” (III.143). In *Pearl*, the river additionally represents a border between mortal and spiritual being, shielding mortals from an unmediated experience of the divine.

Earlier in the poem, the *Pearl*-maiden had explained to the dreamer that things are not as they appear. Heavenly existence is distinct from the conventional idea of physical reality:

Pou says þou may with yȝen me se;  
Anoþer, þou says in Þys countré  
Þyself schal won with me ryȝt here;  
Þe þrydde, to passe þys water fre:  
Þat may no joyfol jueler. (V.294-300)

It is in fact, as she explains, “madde” to speak of such things as men do (V.290). (Madness here may be linked to illusion and *phantasia*.) The dreamer’s words are “vnavysed” because “Þou ne woste in worlde quhat on dotz mene; / Þy worde byfore þy wytte con fle” (V.292-3).<sup>682</sup> There is “lyttel to prayse” in a jeweler that “leuez wel þat he sez with yȝe” (VI.301-2). This is evidence that he may “leuezoure Lorde wolde make a lyȝe,” and forsake his gift of life for Fortune, who “dyd your flesch to dyȝe” (VI.304-6). Epistemology through corporeal vision is associated with the fallible flesh and placed in opposition to the faith in God and the everlasting soul: it is “sorquydryȝe” to “leuez nopynk bot ȝe hit syȝe”, or lack faith (VI.308-9).

A connection may be drawn to Aristotle’s statement that a painting is both a picture and a likeness (and can be contemplated as either), but the “being” of both is not the same. The dreamer’s final transgression of Christ’s word by jumping into the river surrounding the heavenly city most strongly iterates this discrepancy. His inability to cross the border reveals a radical inversion of the two categories, ultimately affirming the transcendent sphere as a superior level of being, and paradoxically more material, than the mortal sphere. It is a poignant reminder of the very human grief

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<sup>682</sup> These lines resemble the Black Knight’s response to the uncomprehending dreamer in *BD*.

that inspires the vision, and how this intense emotion contributes to his understanding of the river as something that can be physically traversed, either willingly or unwittingly resisting the transcendental nature of his surroundings in response to seeing his lost pearl. Borroff writes:

[H]is persistent wrongheadedness makes sense if we consider how deeply founded it is in the limitations of the mortal perspective. Seeing the pearl maiden standing on the other side of a river, he naturally concludes that she is “there” in the same sense in which another person would be there, a certain distance away, in life.<sup>683</sup>

Although the dreamer is in this sense prevented from entering the procession and the city, the vision and his conversation with the Maiden have a profound effect on the development of his perception of and personal relationship to his dream experience. The narrator may appear to surpass John’s description of the City of God, lending the dreamer’s sight a new degree of independence and authority. In Revelation 10:4, John is instructed by God to refrain from further writing. In light of this, Scanlon interprets the line “As John hym wrytez zet more I syze” (XVIII.1033) as “I saw *more* than John wrote.”<sup>684</sup> This reading may be indicative of the dreamer’s newfound independence in response to the illuminating sight of the New Jerusalem. The dreamer does not necessarily see *more* than John, but may see differently because the vision is subject to his own physical and spiritual path along the river, and is a product of his own perspective. In this sense, the dreamer’s sight of the Pearl-maiden alone may qualify him as seeing ‘more’ than John.

Reading the poem’s dramatisation of enlightenment in terms of optical *species* reveals significant points about the participatory nature of illuminating vision. Spearing notes that visionaries are usually observers who, rarely entering the City of God, behold it from a distance.<sup>685</sup> The dreamer of *Pearl* is a participant, not only in dialogue with the maiden or for being cast out of the vision, but as a figure enabling the dramatic representation of seeing, experiencing, and learning. The dreamer’s extended *ekphrasis* may be read as replicating for the audience the effect of immersion, wonder, and

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<sup>683</sup> Borroff, p. 115.

<sup>684</sup> Scanlon, p. 259. (Emphasis added.)

<sup>685</sup> Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry* p. 17.



immediacy that the dreamer had felt and continues to feel.<sup>686</sup> The fact that he is later overwhelmed by the experience and cast out of the dream is a reminder of his subjective vision—he has not become a visionary in the full sense. He himself may be thought of as actualised by the light of his learning, as he struggles with this new vision without losing his mind.

With respect to seeing and re-seeing, the poem gradually inverts the dreamer’s conception of the material as valuable and real. The dreamer’s vision of the New Jerusalem’s bailey is described as marvellous beyond mortal perception, such that “[n]o fleschly hert ne myȝt endeure” (XVIII.1083), and it stuns him. He feels the direct effect of divine light and struggles against his bodily limitations but feels “rauyste with glymme pure” (XVIII.89) by “þat fresh figure” (XVIII.1087). The likening of the narrator to a “dased quayle” (XVIII.1086), as opposed to the earlier image describing him as “stod as hende as hawk in halle” (IV.184), situates him even lower on the scale of creation. Both images render him motionless and passive. The glimmer of the bailey is the dominant force of the scene, ravishing his senses and taking on the role as hunter, for it threatens the living:

So ferly þerof watz þe fasure.  
 I stod as style as dased quayle  
 For ferly of þat fresh figure,  
 Þat flede I naw þer reste ne trauayle,  
 So watz I rauyste with glymme pure.  
 For I dar say with consciens sure,  
 Hade bodyly burne abiden þat bone,  
 Þaȝ alle clerkez hym hade in cure,  
 His lyf wer loste anvnder mone. (XVIII.1085-92)

He is subject to the visual *species* of divine light, which is active, and pierces the soul through the eye. Vision allows the dreamer to go where his body may not, although his soul is bound to his body. His mistake in trying to enter the City illustrates his misunderstanding of the city as a physical and material entity. Only perfect souls “of hert boþe clene and lyȝt” (XII.681) can enter the kingdom and participate in its procession. The image of a clean and light heart as a kind of admission fee imbues the material

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<sup>686</sup> These are three of the effects of *ekphrasis* listed by Bernau, p. 108.

metaphor with spiritual meaning. A heart such as this is one also devoid of its defining physical qualities, and the absence is replaced with spiritual substance so that the heart is not only physically light, but lit. In the City, the heart is immune to temporal change and is eternally safeguarded: “Der schal hys step stable styлле / De innocent is ay saf by ryzt (XII.682-4). This is a place from which the dreamer, of a substance “bot mol and manerez mysse” (VII.382), as he repeatedly states, is barred from entering.

The City’s perfection is also distinguished from mortal life by its stillness. For the living, including the dazed dreamer, stillness signifies a lapse in sensation and thought, and ultimately, death.<sup>687</sup> Spiritual perfection allows one to step into the city, and this movement results in a stillness that is associated with permanent security. Luminescent, heavenly beings are in this respect more material, active, and everlasting by virtue of their light, which constitutes their very essence: God is the Prime Mover. Meanwhile, the clear and luminescent elements which comprise the New Jerusalem—various gems, crystals, pearls: naturally occurring things possessing clarity more akin to today’s glass than the products of medieval craftsmanship, liable to impurities and imperfections—physically actualise divine *species* into a visible form of light. The poem’s list of precious stones comprising the City suggests their symbolic divine qualities as recorded in medieval lapidaries. In this respect, the gemstones are presented in terms analogous to Aristotle’s idea of indexical and symbolic images: the stones with their refractive properties stand as material and transcendently meaningful objects.

The Trinity is evoked in like terms. The “Lompe” is “withouten spottez blake”, “Hys flok is withouten flake”, and “So is Hys mote withouten moote” (XVI.945-8). This information, along with the difference between the Old and New Jerusalems, is explained to the dreamer by the *Pearl*-maiden.

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<sup>687</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius likens the heightened contemplative state to hovering. See Chase, pp. xx-xxiii.

Spiritual ideas are made intelligible to the dreamer. The maiden is a divine intermediary and her words translate and depict the unseen things of the highest level of being. She is here named again as “þat special spyce” (XVI.938). God is expressed as the incarnation, the Lambe, and the source of light, the Lompe of all things within the city: “þe Self God watz her lombe-lyzt” (XVIII.1046). The repetition of “þurȝ” at the beginning of lines emphasizes the centrality of his light, while the repetition and half-rhyme of “hyȝe” and “bryȝt” promote the association of brightness with superiority. It is conceived spatially in terms of the ability to shine through transparent objects (and thus clarified minds and pure souls), and in hierarchical structure. As the dreamer figuratively looks upwards along the Chain of Being, enacting his spiritual ascent, he nears the origin of divine light. The theme of holy enlightenment is illustrated in the Lamp-light motif, which superimposes and illuminates the poem’s most divine symbolism. The light of the Lamb, brighter than the sun and moon, transposes and unites the poem’s many threads, and is the ultimate source of clarity and enlightenment as well as being the source of the river:

þe Lombe her lantyrne, withouten drede  
þurȝ Hym blysned þe borȝ al bryȝt.  
þurȝ woȝe and won my loking ȝede;  
For sotyle cler noȝt lette no syȝt.  
þe hyȝe trone þer moȝt ȝe hede  
With alle þe apparaylmente vmbepȝte,  
As John the appostel in termez tyȝte.  
þe hyȝe Godez Self hit set vpone.  
A reuer of þe trone þer ran outȝte  
Watz bryȝter þen bo þe þe sunne and mone. (XVIII.1047-56)<sup>688</sup>

Andrews and Waldron argue that the river “symbolizes the outpouring of the holy spirit”, alluding to the explanation of God’s gifts in terms of flowing water (XI.605vv). Following the river until its source is seen appears to imbue the dreamer with some of the holy spirit’s species, for he sees and describes things as he sees them personally, and the words of John’s vision are actualized into corporeality. The

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<sup>688</sup> Note the pun on glistening and bliss in “blysned”, the reappearance of “vmbepȝte”, concatenated earlier, and reference to John’s vision.

dreamer “sees again” through John and the maiden. Furthermore, the naming of the New Jerusalem as ““ceté of God” oþer “syȝt of pes”” (XVI.952) plays on the synonymous senses of the city as site and sight of peace; its essence, which equivocates God with peace, is expressed materially and symbolically in visual and spatial terms.

Despite these intimations of the divine, when the dreamer sees the Pearl-maiden in the procession, his limited human perspective, the result of his fallen bodily senses and mortal desire, proves to be his undoing. Although he has gained some enlightenment by the end of the poem, it is through worship and reflection upon his dream. In the dream, the divine *species* capture his imagination but do not ultimately result in him using his will to control his emotions. As we have seen in *BD*, human emotion is a powerful determinant of the dreamer’s perception of and engagement (or disengagement) with reality. The dreamer’s amazement at the whiteness of the procession brings him joy, and the rekindling of “luf-longyng” and delight causes him to consider crossing the river, paralleling the beginning of the dream. Love-longing is something the dreamer has had all along, suggesting mortals can glimpse the divine but never fully understand it:

Lorde, much of mirþe watz þat ho made  
Among her ferez þat watz so quyþ!  
Þat syȝt me gart to þenk to wade  
For luf-longyng in gret delyt. (XX.1149-52)

Whiteness brings him uncontrollable delight. While the effect may be associated with spiritual bliss, it cannot in this context be distinguished from the dreamer’s mortal emotions. The causal link between sight, joy, the step his imagination takes—in thinking of wading—and finally the enactment of his will, suggests the unbreakable bond of human sight, emotion, and will. Delight is emphasized, ending the penultimate fitt of the poem and then beginning the final one:

Delyt me drof in yȝe and ere,  
My manez mynde to madding malte;  
Quen I seȝ my frely, I wolde be þerte,  
Byȝonde þe water þaȝ ho were walte.  
I Þoȝt þat noþyng myȝt me dere  
To fech me bur and take me halte (XX.1153-8)

It would be reductive to read this conclusion as evidence that the dreamer has not changed over the course of the vision. Rather, it is a poignant reminder of the extreme desperation that accompanies his grief, as well as indicating the difference between mortal desire and the heavenly object he seeks to recover. Borroff argues that “the evolution of his attitudes and feelings in the course of the poem breathes dramatic life into what would otherwise have been unrelieved didacticism.”<sup>689</sup>

Furthermore, it is his delight, taken to the extreme, which teaches him the dream’s most valuable lesson. Sensory overload (of eye and ear), coupled with extreme emotion, causes him to experience a temporary bout of madness. For a moment, he irrationally believes that nothing can hold him back. The scene is perhaps reminiscent of Orpheus’ failure to bring Euridice back from Hades, only the dreamer in *Pearl* fulfills the roles of transgressor of divine law and mourner. Wetherbee argues that Orpheus’ heart is “torn by the faithless Muses of memory and lost joys.”<sup>690</sup> We hear no more of Euridice after her parting from Orpheus, but the *Pearl*-dreamer reflects on his dream experience in hindsight, even as the leap occurs in the audience’s present experience of the text. The limitations of mortal life were of course an ever-present reality for those in the medieval West, as they are now. William of Conches’ adage, “It is harder to conquer one’s self than to overthrow a citadel”<sup>691</sup> is as relevant for the dreamer as any of the poem’s contemporary audience.

It is only once he is cast out of the dream and back into the mortal realm that he has the chance for sober reflection upon the dream and his mad mistake:

Hit payed Hym not þat I so flonc  
 Ouer meruelous merez, so mad arayd.  
 Of raas þaȝ I were rasch and ronk.  
 Ȝet rapely þerinne I watz restayed  
 For ryȝt as I sparred vnto þe bonc,  
 Þat brathþe out of my drem me brayed.  
 Þen wakned I in þat erber wlonk;

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<sup>689</sup> Borroff, p. 116.

<sup>690</sup> Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry*, p. 98.

<sup>691</sup> William of Conches, *Glosae super Platonem*, MS. London, B.M. Egerton 628, 165r-195r (fol. 187v), cited in Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry*, p. 97; see Jauneau’s print edition as well.

My hede vpon þat hyle watz layde  
Peras my perle to grounde strayd. (XX.1169-73)

The moment he enters the river and tries to become one with the divine realm, his materiality instead transports him back to earth. When he wakes, the clarity of the spiritual vision is removed and the metaphorical veil of earthly existence is cast back over his eyes. He realises that this is the proper order of things: “al be to Ðat Pryncez paye” (XX.1176). Although it pleases him “ful ille” to be ejected from “Ðat fayre regioun / Fro alle Ðo syʒtez so quyke and queme” (XX.1176, 7-8), the “veray avysoun” given to him by the Pearl is a “dere” gift to him (XX.1184, 3) and he sees the error of his desire, for he should have “ʒerned no more Ðen watz me geuen” (XX.1190). His apprehension of the transcendent “garlande gay” in which she is now set, as opposed to his “doel-doungoun” (XX.1186, 7), assures him of the necessary distinction between heaven and earth, but also the bliss to come.

Borroff explains:

The deepest lesson he has been taught is an imaginative apprehension of what his lost pearl now is, part of an everlasting and changeless order. Such a garland, unlike one made of earthly flowers, cannot fade, nor can the man lose it who has learned to value it properly.<sup>692</sup>

He is now able to see beyond earthly desires and to value the material as a symbol of that which lies beyond, expressed through the sacrament and his new understanding of the pearl as something that is irreducible, indivisible, and universal. It seems his sense of value has been transformed by his heavenly vision, and he now transposes its values onto the sacramental symbols. By the final line, ‘pay’ becomes prayer:

In Krystez dere blessing and myn,  
Ðat in Ðe forme of bred and wyn  
Ðe preste vus schewez vch a daye.  
He gef vus to be His homly hyne  
Ande precious perlez vnto His pay.  
Amen. Amen. (XX.1208-13)

*Pearl* is a richly visual poem and may be read in relation to contemporary theological and philosophical discussions of optics. The idea of *species*, potentially appearing in the poem as part of the

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<sup>692</sup> Borroff, p. 117.

pun on “spyce”, offers useful conceptual and historically sensitive parallels, particularly in reference to divine light. The poem’s central distinction between human and divine—and the interaction between the two in the dream—can be read in terms of philosophical and theological levels of being and materiality. The relationship between visual perception and knowledge in the poem is also shaped by different visual species and their intermediaries, which include ekphrastic renderings of the heavenly landscape and city, and most importantly, the *Pearl*-maiden herself. The poet ultimately corrects the dreamer’s (and the audience’s) ideas about material being by making that which is originally rendered artistically (i.e., the scenes of heaven) more material and active than the dreamer. This experience of seeing by the light of divine species and the final driving point of the distinction between heaven and earth enlightens the dreamer, teaching him how to see beyond the mortal plane.

*BD*, *HF*, and *Pearl* inherited from their allegorical analogues a way of adapting philosophical, theological, and mystical theories of vision for poetic use. These three dream visions thematise the idea of vision—of the eyes, the mind, and the soul—as fundamental to the edifying nature of dreams and the use of poetry to inform (and be informed by) visual experience. While *BD* suggests the artistic and consolatory possibilities of poetic visualisation, *HF* shows that the perceptions of the beholder cannot be controlled: each poetic image or utterance gives birth to something new. The anonymous dream vision *Pearl* adds another perspective to the Chaucerian presentation of vision. It is a religious dream vision, and therefore differs from all of the other poems discussed at length in this thesis. It draws upon, much more elaborately than *BD*, the significance of light in relation to illumination, brightness, dazzling, and purity, all of which are interpreted through the twin valences of spiritual and ocular vision. The *Pearl*-poet uses *ekphrasis* and illumination—which respond to the theory of multiplication of *species*—to signify the visual and existential transfiguration of material into eternal being and meaning, from the *Pearl*-maiden, to the vision fo the *New Jerusalem*, and the spiritual maturation of the dreamer. Although the dreamer, unlike Chaucer’s narrators, glimpses the heavenly

realm with his own eyes, his ousting from the vision ultimately expresses the fallacy of human perception and understanding, and the value of using *visibilia* to understand the invisible secrets of the divine.



## CONCLUSION: HEARING AND SEEING IN DREAMS

This thesis has elucidated the thematic and formal significance of music and visual art in the Middle English dream visions, *BD*, *HF*, *PF*, *KQ*, and *Pearl*, in relation to contextually appropriate theoretical contexts. These texts are representative of broader practices in the generic subcategories of courtly and philosophical vernacular dream poetry of the Middle Ages. As such, this study is not comprehensive, but rather a starting point for future readings in dream visions. Each of these dream visions significantly and innovatively engages with at least one of these arts, and their associated senses, hearing and seeing. I have traced the development of medieval attitudes toward hearing, sound (including *musica* and *vox*), vision, and visual representation (in the plastic arts and in mental images), from early Neoplatonism, to scholasticism, aesthetics, natural philosophy, theology, and mysticism. The Neoplatonist conception of the universe as two realms, microcosm and macrocosm, the intelligible and the abstract—the former mirroring the order and perfection of the superior sphere—is key to medieval theories of art, sensation, and cognition. Humans use sensation and the sensible world to discern the divine truths that underpin all things. Dreams, like the *integumenta* of the liberal arts, or the mental and physical objects of contemplation, are symbols that, when properly understood, allow the human to progress towards the divine. It is necessarily from the corporeal sense, that the human mind proceeds to contemplation of the incorporeal.

I have indicated the variety of ways Chaucer, James I of Scotland, and the *Pearl*-poet generate meaning, by using sonic and visual motifs to stimulate the inner and outer senses. The literary and theoretical analogues of these dream visions inspired innovative, polyvalent approaches to allegory and symbolism. Some, particularly the philosophical allegories of Boethius, Martianus Capella, and Alan of Lille, demonstrated the treatment of these themes in a literary context, while the writers of the *RR* added courtly love to the range of typically cosmological or intellectual content.

The literary application of these themes encouraged a view of the arts as potentially edifying and revitalising. The vernacular English dream vision became a powerful tool for expressing the abstract, ineffable, and transcendent, knowledge normally gained through personal recollection, self-reflection, spiritual contemplation, and apotheosis, and made more accessible. The medieval dream vision, with its fantastical material and frequently nonlinear narrative, was no less effective as an artificial simulation of the marvellous experience typically accorded to a privileged few—Scipio, for instance. Intermedial narratives such as these enabled audiences to imagine the dream as a potentially truthful auditory and visual illusion, granting them passage into the realm of the marvellous, the unconscious, and the dark night of the soul. In listening to and reading these visions, audiences are invited to partake in an artistically mediated form of the dream experience, allowing imagined and recollected sounds and visions to tap into the deeper, universal order that is reflected in all created things.

Secular and spiritual dream visions foreground the dream encounter as somehow revealing hidden truth, whether personal or universal. Knowledge and truth, however, are relative terms. The human dreamers of vernacular dream poetry, as in some Latin analogues, such as the *Consolation* and *DPN*, are granted a degree of sensory interaction with extraordinary things—from the chaotic, as in *HF*, to the divine, as in *Pearl*. While these dreams are presented as somehow edifying or otherwise beneficial to the dreamers, pure truth and wisdom remain beyond mortal reach, even in dreams. The dreamers of *BD*, *HF*, *PF*, *KQ*, and *Pearl* all, ultimately, see through a glass darkly, as transcendental truth is necessarily veiled. This layer—like Nature’s integumental covering in *DPN*, the traces of secret rhythms in Augustine’s *De musica*, the multiplied lights described by Pseudo-Dionysius and Grosseteste, that descend from a single divine ray into corporeality, and Macrobius’ veiled dream symbols—simultaneously conceals and reveals. It shrouds the ideal so as to reveal its meaning in terms

accessible to human thought and sensation. It clothes the invisible, sounds the inaudible, and demonstrates the eternal movements in observable time (as ripples in water).

Furthermore, the dream poems analysed in this thesis often highlight the difficulty of sensing or thinking about such truths, even when they are visible or audible. The task of interpreting significant dreams, omens, and visions was entrusted to philosophers and other wise individuals, as described in the Bible, in Macrobius' *Commentary*, and commonly throughout medieval literature. In dream visions, however, the limitations of human capability are emphasised. In Chaucer's very first dream vision, *BD*, the narrator claims that the meaning of his dream would evade even the most skilled dreamers, Joseph and Macrobius. In *RR*, similarly, Guillaume states that the dream's meaning will be clarified in the ending, but Jean de Meun provides no authoritative explication. Potential authority and unmediated truth are also denied in *HF* and *Pearl*, while *PF* generates a symbolic resolution in spite of the debate's apparent irresolution. The audible and the visible material of dreams is sometimes equally challenging. The images upon Nature's robe and Genius' book in *DPN* continually transform, Lady Fame shrinks and grows before Geoffrey's very eyes in *HF*, and in *Pearl*, the maiden's radiant appearance confounds the dreamer's sight. In these examples and others, the literary techniques of *enargeia* and *ekphrasis* stimulate the inner and outer eye. The many senses implied by the term *musica*, as poetic and melodic, theoretical and practical, monophonic and polyphonic, corporeally and incorporeally sensed, ordered and in *concordia discors*, also contribute to the complex meaning of musical symbolism in dream poetry. In *PF*, the birds make harmony and cacophony, *vox literata* and *illiterata*, in *BD*, the knight sings tunelessly, and in *KQ*, a bell tolls and speaks.

What emerges from failed, confused, and distorted perception in vernacular dream poetry is not merely a dismissal of human limitation. More significantly, the Middle English dream visions discussed in this thesis use the dream conceit, in conjunction with the aforementioned complex representations of sensed phenomena, to present dreamers' waking troubles in alternate, though

ultimately recognisable, dream forms. The dreamers' thoughts are transformed, distorted, and striated, engaging the inner and outer senses, and ultimately transforming the pre-*somnium* mode of understanding. Such understanding may not be perfect, abstract truth, but it is nevertheless a form of human truth. Chaucer suggests this in generating forms of meaning within dream narratives that are disjointed, abrupt, perhaps unfinished, and open-ended. It is through an awareness of the most significant ideas about music and art for the medieval period, which I have outlined in the two theoretical chapters, that *BD*, *HF*, and *PF* present kinds of resolution that are evident beneath ostensible irresolution: the *discordia concors* that is characteristic of the city of man, as Augustine argues, but is indicative of the order within. The narratives of *KQ* and *Pearl*, by contrast, continue after the dreams, integrating the dream experience with waking life. All of these texts reveal the coexistence of order and disorder in human nature, challenging dreamers, poets, and audiences to discern traces of the imperishable and eternal harmony, beauty, unity, and love that govern the human microcosm.

This thesis therefore represents a new direction in medieval dream vision studies, reading the use of music and visual art in terms of the rich theoretical contexts of both categories, and particularly the relationship between the inner and outer senses. My analysis of the selected dream visions reveals the importance of considering the two arts in relation to poetry, understanding them from practical and intellectual perspectives, and reading the poetic extension of these ideas in terms of the purpose of the arts. From this perspective, we can better understand the possibility of the soul's journey toward human truth—not just in dreams, but in art and music—attached to the earthly body.

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